

TEXAS MILESTONES

VICTIM RIGHTS AND SERVICES

- 1977 Harris County District Attorney's Office establishes its Victim Witness Division, the first prosecutor-based victim services program in Texas.
- 1977 The first battered women's shelter opens in Austin, followed by a shelter in Houston.
- 1978 Six women meet in Austin to form the Texas Council on Family Violence with the purpose of representing Texas' six battered women's shelters in their efforts to secure state funding and pass protective order legislation.
- 1979 The Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Act is passed creating the Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund and providing a mechanism for victims to receive financial assistance to offset costs for certain expenses related to the crime. The Crime Victims' Compensation Program is administered by the Industrial Accident Board with the Attorney General's Office handling eligibility requirements.
- 1980 Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) national organization is created. First Texas chapter begins operations and volunteer state governing board coordinates development of MADD in Texas.
First Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Texas is established in Dallas.
- 1982 Nell Myers forms People Against Violent Crime, an Austin-based victim services group that will become a prime mover in the effort to pass victim rights legislation.
The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is started in Galveston, and holds its first conference in conjunction with UTMB.
- 1983 Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse is created by Executive Order of Governor Mark White and established in the Governor's Office as an information and referral service for crime victims and a resource for model program development and training for victim service providers.
- 1984 First Sexual Assault Awareness Week established in April.
- 1985 Crime Victims' Bill of Rights added to Texas Code of Criminal Procedure putting protection for victims in state laws. Requirements for designated victim services personnel limited to communities with populations greater than 150,000.
- 1988 MADD Texas State Office has its first paid staff.

1989 Texas Legislature adds Crime Victim Rights to the state juvenile code extending rights to victims of juvenile offenders. There is no requirement, however, for designated victim services personnel.

In November, voters overwhelmingly approve an amendment adding Crime Victim Rights to the Texas State Constitution.

Texas CASA is established as a statewide nonprofit organized as a 501(c)(3) based in Austin.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles designates staff to serve as liaisons for victims and survivors to learn about offender parole status.

The Bridge Children's Advocacy Center in Amarillo opens its doors as Texas' first children's advocacy center.

1990 Texas CASA holds its first annual statewide training conference in Austin.

1991 The Texas Legislature moves all functions related to Crime Victims' Compensation to the Office of the Attorney General.

Governor Ann Richards appoints Ellen Halbert to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice – the first victim ever to serve on the board that oversees the state's criminal justice system.

Texas CASA hires its first full-time employee.

Sexual Assault Awareness Week expanded to the entire month of April.

The Texas Legislature requires law enforcement officers and prosecutors to provide victims with a written notice of their rights.

Twenty-three people are murdered at the Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, making Texas the site of the nation's worst mass casualty incident to date. In response to the lessons learned at Luby's, the Division of Emergency Management within the Texas Department of Public Safety forms the State Crisis Response Task Force to develop a protocol for the state to provide crisis response to communities affected by mass casualty incidents. Victim service practitioners partner with emergency management officials to provide training on the model throughout the state.

1992 The first state sponsored crisis response team assists victims of a tornado in Fritch, Texas.

1993 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault obtains its 501 (c) (3) status.

A Victim Services section is established in the Parole Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to notify crime victims whose offenders are incarcerated within TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division about their offender's status. The Victim Services section establishes a toll-free hotline for victims, 1-800-84VICTIM. The Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue Program is formed within Victim Services after a crime victim requests this service.

1994 The first Crime Victim Rights Summit is held in Austin, co-sponsored by the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, the Texas Youth Commission, Crime Victims' Compensation Division in the Office of the Attorney General, TDCJ Victim Services, and the Texas District and County Attorneys Association. Attorney General Dan Morales and MADD National Director of Victim Services Janice Harris Lord are keynote speakers at this gathering of nearly 300 people who meet to discuss strategies for the second decade of victim rights in Texas.

The State Agency Task Force on Victim Services is created in the Governor's Office, based on recommendations developed by stakeholders at the Crime Victim Rights Summit.

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse receives the Tadini Bacigalupi Distinguished Program Award from the National Organization for Victim Assistance.

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas is founded by 13 local CAC's across the state and is incorporated as a 501(c) (3).

The Texas Corrections Association establishes a Victim Issues Committee and appoints as its chair the director of the first probation-based victim services program in Texas, Jim Sinclair from the Tarrant County Probation Department.

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse and the Texas Youth Commission develop the first victim impact statement for victims of juveniles.

1995 The Texas Legislature creates the Crime Victims' Institute within the Office of the Attorney General.

The Texas Legislature approves \$3 million in the state's first appropriation to the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc., to foster the development of a multidisciplinary setting for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases.

The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education expands its Basic Peace Office Course requirements to include victimology and victim rights.

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. hires its first staff.

1996 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault hires its first paid employee and opens an office in Austin.

Texas Council on Family Violence opens the National Domestic Violence Hotline with a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

1996 TWA Flight 800 crashes after taking off for Paris from New York's LaGuardia Airport. Among those killed is Pam Lychner, a Houston-based victim rights advocate, and founder of Justice for All, and her two daughters. After her death, the United States Congress passes the Pam Lychner Sexual Offender Tracking and Identification Act of 1996 in honor of her victim advocacy efforts.

1996 “Partners in Justice,” a collaborative effort of victim practitioners and criminal justice professionals, is published by the Crime Victims’ Compensation Division in the Office of the Attorney General. “Partners” provides a curriculum for training law enforcement officers on their role in victim assistance. Sections of the manual can be excerpted to meet the TCLEOSE basic peace officer course requirements.

“Safeguarding the Rights of Victims of Juveniles” is published to help implement new provisions for victim rights in the juvenile justice system. This training manual is the result of a collaborative effort of stakeholders led by the Crime Victims Compensation Division in the Office of the Attorney General, the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, and longtime juvenile justice adviser Robert Dawson, from the University of Texas School of Law.

The National Institute for Victim Studies, the first victim services/academic partnership, is established by MADD National and the University of North Texas in Denton.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopts a board rule permitting victims to witness executions. Viewing is limited to immediate family members and individuals who had a close relationship to the deceased victim.

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) is transferred from the Office of the Governor to the TDCJ Victim Services section. Legislative mandates provide TxCVC with guidance regarding the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) and other services.

1997 Texas Department of Public Safety establishes its first Victim Services program.

Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) is established as a 501(c) (3), a professional association whose mission is support, education and recognition for victim service providers in Texas.

The TDCJ Victim Services section is elevated to division status within the agency.

The Texas Legislature amends and strengthens the enabling language of Chapter 264 of the Texas Family Coded in support of the multidisciplinary model utilized at the 32 children’s advocacy centers across the state.

1998 TVSA holds its first training conference in Austin with 40 people in attendance.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice revises its rule to allow victim witnesses at executions to include close friends of surviving relatives. Other witnesses are allowed to view at the statutory victims’ discretion.

1999 Texas Legislature appropriates money from the Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund to support victim services through Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas, Texas CASA, and TDCJ Victim Services.

\$2 million is appropriated from the Fund and allocated as the first state funding for mandated crime victim liaisons and victim assistance coordinators.

1999 The Crime Victims' Institute sponsors the first Symposium on Research, Practice, and Policy, bringing together researchers and practitioners to discuss trends, issues and best practices.

The Victim Impact Panel Program is established within the TDCJ Victim Services Division to provide crime victims the opportunity to share details of their victimization with criminal justice professionals, students and offenders while also heightening victim sensitivity and awareness.

The National Institute on Victim Studies, the MADD National victim services/academic partnership, moves to Sam Houston State University.

2000 Attorney General John Cornyn creates the Crime Victim Services Division – consolidating all victim service programs in his office into a single division.

MADD Texas State receives funding for a comprehensive statewide victim services program – enabling the office to provide victim services to every victim of drunk driving.

2001 Texas is one of the first five states to receive funding for a state academy through a federal grant from the Office for Victims of Crime. The Texas Academy for Victim Assistance is conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute in the Office of the Attorney General, on the campus of the academic partner, Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

The Texas Legislature appropriates \$20 million from the Crime Victims Compensation Fund to create the Other Victim Assistance Grant (OVAG) Program through the Office of the Attorney General, making funding available for law enforcement based crime victim liaisons, prosecutor based victim assistance coordinators and nonprofit victim services.

The Texas Legislature passes House Bill 1572 to fund the implementation of a statewide automated victim notification system. The Crime Victims' Institute in the Office of the Attorney General develops a pilot for the program, called Texas VINE.

The Texas Legislature gives crime victims the right to request victim offender mediation coordinated by the TDCJ Victim Services Division. Legislation also gives the Texas crime Victim Clearinghouse statutory authority to hold an annual conference to provide training and information on crime victims' rights to participants in the criminal justice system.

2002 The second Texas Victim Assistance Academy is held in Huntsville, Texas, with Sam Houston State University as the academic partner. The Academy is coordinated by the Crime Victims' Institute in the Office of the Attorney General through continuation funding from a federal grant from the Office for Victims of Crime.

The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is established at The University of Texas at Austin as a research-to-practice collaboration. IDVSA transfers research and evaluation results back to the field through training and technical assistance, and information dissemination, and serves the practitioner community and the community at large.

2003 The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault publishes the first study on sexual assault prevalence in Texas. The study is funded by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and the Office of the Attorney General.

The third Texas Academy for Victim Assistance is conducted by the Office of the Attorney General on the campus of academic partner, Sam Houston State University in Huntsville.

The Texas Legislature passes SB 1245 transferring the Crime Victims' Institute from the Office of the Attorney General to Sam Houston State University.

2004 The TDCJ Victim Services Division training section is re-organized and renamed the Victim Support and Community Education (VSCE) Program. Victim service staff has provided training on victim issues from the beginning of the section's establishment. The main purpose of the training section was to provide victim sensitivity training to criminal justice professionals and victim advocates. The VSCE program's role is enhanced with the addition of providing prison tours and assisting crime victims and support persons during the execution process.

Sam Houston State University offers the first Bachelor of Arts degree in Victim Studies in the nation.

2005 Houston Judge Ted Poe is elected to Congress, bringing his innovative and staunch advocacy for crime victims and victim rights to national policy discussions.

TDCJ Victim Services Division partners with Appriss Inc., provider of Texas VINE, to enhance the written notification system by providing an automated telephone service to crime victims and concerned citizens who are registered with the division's Victim Notification System. The system notifies registrants when their offender is being released from incarceration either on parole, mandatory supervision or direct discharge.

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc., receives a capital gift/endowment which is used to purchase a building for permanent office space with training facilities.

Texas CASA receives a capital gift and endowment which it uses to purchase a building for its operations.

2007 Crime Victims First is established as a 501(c) (3) based in Austin. Through its online Crime Victims' Rights Resource Center, its mission is to promote and protect crime victims' rights, prevent rights violations, and improve the treatment of victims/survivors through education, advocacy, and enforcement using technology.

2008 TVSA holds its tenth anniversary conference in Austin with 200 people in attendance. The event is supported through the first state conference grant from the Office for Victims of Crime. The Texas Academy for Victim Assistance is offered as a separate track at the conference through funding to TVSA from the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division.

2008 The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault publishes findings from its statewide study on human trafficking, conducted in response to SB 11 and HB 1121 to study the efficacy of state laws and social services for victims of human trafficking. The study is funded by the Office of the Attorney General and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice revises its rule to allow victim witnesses at executions to include a spiritual advisor to accompany them. The spiritual advisor must be a bona fide pastor or comparable official of the victim's religion.

The Institute on Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue is established at The University of Texas at Austin to provide support to the rapidly emerging restorative justice initiatives in Texas, many of which have national implications.

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault holds its 25th Annual Conference, themed "Prevention and Advocacy: Partners for Change."

2009 Harris County Victim Witness Division is renamed the Victim Rights Division.

Texas CASA holds its 20th annual conference in San Marcos. The 69th local CASA program in Texas is established in Georgetown in Williamson County.

Crime Victims First receives a grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to upgrade its website and develop a Victims' Rights Enforcement and Compliance Curriculum, and launches its first victims' rights enforcement initiative in Texas.

The Special Projects position is established in TDCJ Victim Services Division to increase awareness, evaluate and enhance the division's services and programs through research and collaboration with internal and external entities. The position also serves as a point of contact for criminal justice professionals and victim advocates, and provides direct support and services to crime victims.

The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is awarded a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime to develop and evaluate an organizationally based program to build resiliency in child abuse staff and volunteers.

2010 TVSA conducts the second offering of the Texas Academy for Victim Assistance through funding from the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division. Thirty-three people attended the week-long foundation level training held on the campus of the academic partner, The University of Texas at Arlington.

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc., launches "One with Courage," the first statewide public awareness campaign specifically targeting child sexual abuse.

Crime Victims First holds its first Jam 4 Justice Victims' Rights Outreach Concert, putting the issue of victim rights before Austin's music community.

2011 Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc., is the largest association of children's advocacy centers in the nation. Its 64 children's advocacy centers serve 40,000 children a year, in 158 counties where 93% of the state's population resides.

Compiled by the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at The University of Texas at Austin IDVSA for Crime Victims Rights Week 2011. To make changes or add your agency's milestones, contact IDVSA@mail.utexas.edu