

Crime Victims' Institute



In this issue

From the Director **P.1**

Focus On **P.2**

Sexual Assault Kit Project **P.2**

In the Works **P.3**

Let's Discuss It **P.3**

CVI Advisory Board **P.3**

TSUS Board of Regents **P.3**

Upcoming Events **P.4**

Our Mission

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to :

- Conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- Improve services to victims
- Assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- Inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

Sam Houston[™]
STATE UNIVERSITY

MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM[™]

From the Director:

April is a very active month for awareness, recognition, and prevention of victimization. The whole month represents Sexual Assault Awareness Month (www.nsvrc.org/saam), and this year's theme is encouraging conversations about healthy sexuality to prevent child sexual abuse. The Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) is partnering with organizations at SHSU and statewide on a number of initiatives related to sexual assault. The Texas State Legislature is currently considering a bill (HB1229) that would create a statewide Campus Sexual Assault Task Force. Related to this issue, the Institute has initiated a study of perceptions of sexual assault among campus police officers. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) has begun its campaign, ***The Social Justice League - Putting Justice into the System***, and is planning a number of activities throughout the month. Check out their website for more information (www.taasa.org).

This month will also see a number of events related to National Crime Victims' Rights Week (April 21-27). Events to be held in Austin include a tree planting at the Capi-

tol to honor Suzanne McDaniel, a screening of the movie "Heaven's Rain," and the Annual Crime Victims' Rights Ceremony, which will be live-streamed. For more information about these events, please visit the Crime Victims' Rights Week Texas Planning Committee's website (<http://crimevictimsrights.eventbrite.com/>).

The April spotlight on sexual assault and the rights of crime victims serves as a reminder that there is still much work to be done to address the needs of crime victims and to prevent victimization, especially in addressing the root causes of sexual violence. The Crime Victims' Institute continues to conduct research on these issues and to collaborate with agencies throughout the state to put this research into effective practice.

Leana A. Bouffard, Ph.D.
Director, Crime Victims' Institute

Published by
The Crime Victims' Institute
College of Criminal Justice
Sam Houston State University



**National Crime Victims'
Rights Week**

**April 21-27
2013**

Focus on:

Tasha Menaker

Graduate Assistant

Tasha has an MA in clinical psychology and is a doctoral candidate in the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University. Her research interests are trauma and posttraumatic growth and violence against women, including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and the commercial sexual exploitation of girls. Tasha's research has appeared in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Violence Against Women*, *Child Abuse Review*, *Victims and Offenders*, and *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*. She is a research assistant for Dr. Courtney Franklin, and is currently teaching Gender and Crime at SHSU.



Examining the Issues

Sexual Assault Kit Project

Recent attention has focused on the backlog of evidence processing from sexual assault kits collected during police investigations. Doctoral student Tasha Menaker has been working for Dr. William Wells on a project funded by the National Institute of Justice, carried out in collaboration with the Houston Police Department (HPD). The purpose of the project is to: (a) understand the factors that have contributed to large numbers of sexual assault kits that have not been submitted to the crime lab for testing, (b) understand the manner in which sexual assault kit evidence is used in investigations and prosecutions, and (c) develop a sustainable, model strategy for the effective use of sexual assault kit testing results at HPD. Tasha's role in the project included interviewing investigators in the Sex Crimes Unit at HPD about several areas of interest, including training in the Sex Crimes Unit, the investigation of sexual assault cases, sexual assault case processing, investigators' use of sexual assault kit evidence, and working with victims of sexual assault. In addition, Tasha has delivered presentations and

authored papers that summarize project findings.

Several important findings have emerged from the ongoing project, which will continue into the spring of 2014. Interviews with investigators in the Adult and Juvenile Sex Crimes Units revealed that DNA evidence has limited influence during investigations and is most useful in combination with other evidentiary factors such as victim credibility and witness statements. In addition, it was found that HPD Sex Crimes investigators lack specialized training with regard to victim management and understanding behavioral reactions to trauma. As a result, training and education for investigators regarding victim behavior and traumatic responses has been incorporated into future phases of the project. Interview data also revealed that some investigators do not collaborate with victim advocates who may improve victim participation in justice system processes. Accordingly, funding is being used to hire a full-time victim advocate who will collaborate with investigators in the Adult Unit, with the goal of improving services for victims.





In the Works....

Look for upcoming publications from the Crime Victims' Institute on:

- Stalking Update
- Crime Victims Compensation Fund
- Awareness and Use of Sex Offender Registries
- Perceptions of Sexual Assault among Campus Police

Crime Victims' Institute Advisory Board

Dallas Barrington, Kountze
Hardin County District Attorney Office

Victoria Camp, Austin
Deputy Director, Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

Representative Stefani Carter, Austin
State House of Representatives

Dr. Ben M. Crouch, College Station
Texas A&M University (Retired)

Ms. Nancy Holmes Ghigna, Conroe
Victim Assistance Coordinator,
Montgomery County District Attorney's Office

Rodman Goode, Dallas
Deputy Marshall, Dallas Marshall's Office

Henry Porretto, Galveston
Chief, Galveston Police Department

Richard L. Reynolds, Austin
Psychotherapist

Stephanie Anne Schulte, El Paso
ICU Nurse

The Honorable Kel Seliger, Austin
State Senator

Jane Shafer, San Antonio
San Antonio PD Victim Liaison

Debbie Unruh, Amarillo
Captain, Randall County Sheriff's Office

Ms. Mary Anne Wiley, Austin
Office of the Governor

Mark Wilson, Fort Worth
Police Officer, Fort Worth Police Department

Texas State University System Board of Regents

Donna N. Williams, Chairman
(Arlington)

Ron Mitchell, Vice Chair
(Horseshoe Bay)

Charlie Amato
(San Antonio)

Dr. Jamie R. Garza
(San Antonio)

Kevin J. Lilley
(Houston)

David Montagne
(Beaumont)

Vernon Reeser III
Bellaire

Rossanna Salazar
(Austin)

William F. Scott
(Nederland)

Andrew Greenberg,
Student Regent
(Beaumont)

Brian M. McCall
Chancellor

Let's discuss it:

Campus sexual assault is a widespread problem at colleges and universities across the country and in Texas. College women face a higher risk of sexual assault victimization than their peers who do not attend college, and estimates suggest that 20-25% of college women will be victimized during her college career. While federal policies, like Title IX and the Clery Act, provide guidelines for campus response to and reporting requirements for these incidents, research suggests that about two-thirds of colleges and universities are not in compliance. Within recent years some campuses have initiated coordinated community response plans to bring together both campus and community organizations in an effort to respond to and prevent campus sexual assault.

Please contact us at crimevictims@shsu.edu to share your thoughts about how college and university administrators, student government, victim service providers, the criminal justice system, and others should work together to provide a more effective response to campus sexual assault.



Upcoming Events



Texas Victim Services Association
South Padre Island, TX

05/07-10/13

April - National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April - Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April - National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Share your ideas:

We welcome your input. Please send issues or topics you would like to see CVI conduct research on to : crimevictims@shsu.edu

Visit :

<http://www.nsvrc.org/saam>

for more information



Issue 2 April 2013

Crime Victims' Institute

P.O. Box 2180
Huntsville, TX 77341