



Sexual Assault Response Teams: The Facts

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What are Sexual Assault Response Teams? (SARTs)

SARTs are a formalized coordinated response to sexual assault that allow multi-disciplinary professionals to coordinate and develop interagency responses.[1,2] SARTs are composed of public and private partners who work together to address and provide a community-based response to adult (and sometimes adolescent) sexual assault through an intentional coordination of service providers and first responders.[1] SARTs began forming in the United States more than 30 years ago and continue to form across the country.[3] In 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature passed a law requiring that all Texas counties form an adult SART in an effort to create a statewide infrastructure of resources, awareness, connection, and coordination to address sex crimes locally (S.B. No. 476).[2] As a part of that work, the team is responsible for developing a county or region-wide interagency written protocol. Although each protocol may contain different policies and procedures, SART responses should always be modeled in a way that prioritizes safety and empowers victim choice in the process.[1]

Have You Heard?

- In Texas, under S.B. 476, counties with a population of 250,000 residents or fewer have the option of partnering with nearby counties to form a regional SART.[2]
- 149 Texas counties are establishing or have a SART.[4]
- The mandated core members of a SART are representatives from Sexual Assault Program(s), the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, and the Police Department, as well as a Mental/Behavioral Health Services Provider, and a Sexual Assault Nurse or Forensic Examiner/Hospital.[1,2]

What are the Benefits of SARTs?

SARTs are a well-tested way for localities to address sexual assault in a coordinated manner.[6] The information sharing, evaluation, and protocol development that take place in these groups promote an efficient and trauma-informed response. Communities that use SARTs are shown to have higher rates of survivor engagement and offender accountability.[1,3] Given that law enforcement agencies, rape crisis centers, forensic examiners, and prosecutors have often been isolated in their response to the victims they serve, SARTs ensure interdisciplinary collaboration.[1,7] Furthermore, SARTs provide wrap-around support and communication through each step in the process, resulting in victims being more likely to be prioritized.[1]

Why are SARTs Needed?

Of the sexual assaults reported to police, only a small percentage lead to an arrest, and even fewer cases result in a guilty plea and/or go to trial, suggesting that in most communities perpetrators are not being held accountable.[1] This outcome is illustrative of the host of cultural and systemic barriers to addressing sexual assault, and demonstrates one of the main reasons why SARTs are important and necessary. Streamlined access to services and referrals, support with navigating the criminal justice system, efficient use of limited community resources, and improved understanding of sexual violence as a major public health concern are additional ways that SARTs help survivors and the community.[1,3,6]

Resources

Texas

- **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)** – <https://www.taasa.org/sart>
- **Office of the Texas Governor** – <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/sastf-resources-for-sexual-assault-response-teams>

National

- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)** – <https://www.nsvrc.org/sarts/toolkit/1>

References

- [1] An Introduction to SARTs in Texas. (2021). Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA). <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/633f2a40ed34f47be5f34fb1/t/638f71ff00110576148d32f3/1670345216267/sartguid-e-11.16.21.pdf>
- [2] Resources for Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). (2025). Office of the Texas Governor. <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/cjd/sastf-resources-for-sexual-assault-response-teams>
- [3] Welcome to the SART Toolkit. (2025). National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). <https://www.nsvrc.org/sarts/toolkit/1>
- [4] Texas SARTs: Findings from the First Biennial Reports. (2025). Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA). <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/633f2a40ed34f47be5f34fb1/t/681b777dfa1f6923bc873c9b/1746630535451/SART+Biennial+Report+Findings+-+2025.pdf>
- [5] Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). (2025). Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA). <https://www.taasa.org/sart>
- [6] Nugent-Borakove et al. (2006). Testing the Efficacy of SANE/SART Programs: Do They Make a Difference in Sexual Assault Arrest & Prosecution Outcomes? *National Institute of Justice Journal* (282). <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/testing-efficacy-sanesart-programs-do-they-make-difference-sexual-assault>
- [7] Greeson, M. R., Campbell, R., & Bybee, D. (2015). Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Functioning and Effectiveness. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publication_researchbrief_sexual-assault-response-team-functioning-effectiveness.pdf

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Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846