

89TH SESSION UPDATE

 **tcfv**
TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE



APPROPRIATIONS

MAINTAINING ACCESS TO SAFETY & SUPPORT

Family Violence Services: Overall Funding of \$93.9M in the 89th Legislature

TCFV thanks the Texas Legislature for maintaining level funds for family violence survivors' continued access to safety. In the 88th Texas Legislature, \$88 million was appropriated for fiscal years 2024-25 (FY 24-FY 25). **For the FY 26-27 biennium, \$93.9 million was appropriated for core family violence services.** These funds will be distributed through the Health and Human Services Commission Family Violence Program to Family Violence Centers statewide who offer lifesaving services including hotlines, shelter, advocacy, safety planning, and much more. Service numbers increased thanks to funds invested by the legislature in the last biennium and in FY 2024, including **over 200,000 more services a year.** The FY 26-27 appropriation includes a \$6 million increase from last biennium, attributed to Federal funds.



Denied shelter rate
59% ↘ **50%**

In FY 24 there was a significant decrease in the denied shelter solely due to lack of space rate. The need for services is still high indicating a need to focus on urgent safety needs and long-term housing stability.



OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY

Battering Intervention & Prevention Programs (BIPPs)

BIPPs are offender accountability programs that offer alternatives to incarceration via violence intervention that promote healthy, nonviolent relationships and parenting skills. Increasing safety for survivors of family violence is the fundamental goal of BIPPs. BIPP funds are administered by the Community Justice Assistance Division within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. **For the FY 26-27 biennium, the legislature awarded level funding of \$5M plus as additional \$925,000 championed by Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa.** These funds are vitally important for the BIPPs throughout the state.

LETHALITY REDUCTION

Domestic Violence High Risk Teams

Domestic Violence High-Risk Teams (DVHRTs) establish a community-driven, collaborative response to identify survivors facing the greatest risk of lethal violence. Through coordinated efforts among law enforcement, family violence advocates, prosecutors, and other key partners, survivors receive specialized support. This wraparound approach prioritizes survivor safety while ensuring offenders are held accountable. **In the 89th legislature funding was maintained for DVHRTs at \$600,000 over the FY 26-27 biennium, appropriated to the Office of the Attorney General.**

“

It is a moral imperative that the state of Texas helps to ensure this critical support to survivors and maintain the funding we have historically delivered.

–Representative
Mary González

”

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funds

In order to maintain level funding to prior years a request of \$177 million over the biennium was necessary. With support from the Governor’s office via a partial exceptional item request an additional request was made to reach the needed funds. **\$177 million was added to federal funding amounts to keep the total VOCA amount level.** A huge thanks to our state partners, led by Child Advocacy Centers of Texas, who collaborated to achieve this goal.

TCFV LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: CENTERING SURVIVORS' VOICES IN SYSTEM CHANGE

SB1120 EXPANDING CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Authors: Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa & Senator Huffman

Sponsor: Representative A. Johnson

In Article 56A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, often referred to as the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights, survivors of sexual assault, stalking, indecent assault, and trafficking have the right to confer with the prosecutor on disposition decisions, including plea agreements or dismissal of charges, rather than solely getting notice of such decisions. Until now, the code excluded survivors of family violence from this right. SB 1120 closes that gap in the code and now grants family violence survivors the right to confer with prosecutors on plea agreement or other disposition decisions. SB 1120 also gives family violence survivors the right to request disclosure of evidence collected during an investigation or an estimated date of disclosure and the status of any analyses performed on that evidence, as well as notification when a request is submitted to process and analyze evidence. Additionally, SB 1120 more clearly outlines the rights of stalking victims by including those victims in the section addressing family violence survivors rather than the section addressing sexual assault survivors. With this shift, stalking victims will be entitled to the rights that best align with this offense.

The bill was also amended to include a survivor's right to be informed of a defendant's release on parole, parole conditions, or revocation of parole, as well as any offense charged, or arrest warrant issued, while the defendant is on parole. Another amendment added that protective orders granted against a respondent in a dissolution of marriage, Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship (SAPCR), or as a result of criminal offense, will remain in effect until the second anniversary of the final order or disposition. Ultimately, this measure grants family violence survivors the rights they deserve in criminal cases and promotes greater safety and voice in the criminal justice process, while aiming to minimize re-traumatization.



“As both a former DA and now as a County Attorney, I've seen firsthand how including a victim's voice enhances justice, strengthens cases, and increases safety for victims.

-Testimony for SB 1120 from
County Attorney, Staley Heatly

HB4238 DEBT COLLECTION PROTECTION FOR SURVIVORS OF COERCED DEBT

Author: Representative Meyer; Sponsor: Senator Zaffirini



TCFV, in collaboration with our partners at Texas Appleseed, Texas Advocacy Project, and the Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt supported HB 4238, which expands protections for survivors experiencing coerced debt. Financial abuse occurs in nearly all relationships where family violence is occurring and this can include coerced debt, which is when an abusive partner incurs debt in a survivor's name without consent, or through intimidation or threats.

Coerced debt often damages a survivor's credit score and in turn limits their opportunities for housing, employment, and accessing the resources needed to leave the relationship. Groundwork has been laid in previous sessions to ensure survivors of coerced debt are accurately defined as victims of identity theft and can receive protection and relief that any other victim of identity theft would receive. This bill takes those protections a step further and ensures survivors are protected from ongoing debt collection for debts they never incurred in the first place. Creditors can still pursue the person who actually incurred the debt but cannot pursue the victim of identity theft. HB 4238 will help survivors access the level of protection they need from the ongoing impact of coerced debt and address an important need in rebuilding financial stability.



SB1946

HONORING TEXAS VICTIMS TASK FORCE: PREVENTION & REDUCTION OF CRIMINAL FAMILY VIOLENCE HOMICIDES

Author: Senator Zaffirini; Sponsor: Representative Manuel

Family violence homicides are a devastating tragedy in Texas. Nearly 2000 Texans, primarily women, have been murdered in our state over a ten-year period. Although many efforts have been made to prevent and reduce these homicides, both at the legislature and in communities, the number of victims in Texas murdered by their intimate partner has been alarmingly high since 2020. Research has shown time and again that there are three top lethality factors in family violence homicides:

strangulation, stalking, and firearms. In addition to these, there are other risk and protective factors that are important to consider when trying to prevent and reduce family violence homicide in Texas.

SB 1946 creates a time-limited taskforce housed in the Office of the Governor with a wide range of members, such as law enforcement, state agencies, advocates, survivors, and others, to foster understanding across systems about the reseach we have seen for years.



The task force will make systemic and legislative recommendations to reduce this preventable violence. In addition to policy recommendations for the 90th legislative session, the taskforce will provide recommendations for training and service coordination efforts, and will also review data on prevention, investigation and prosecution of family violence homicides, and services provided to survivors.

HB3783 INCREASED SAFETY FOR SURVIVORS IN COURT-ORDERED COUNSELING

Author: Representative Hull; Sponsor: Senator Parker



Currently, Sec. 153.010 of the Texas Family Code allows the court to order parties with a history of conflict in conservatorship or possession issues to participate in counseling but does not offer protections for survivors of family violence and their children in these cases. Under existing law, a survivor of family violence, including a child survivor, could be ordered to attend counseling sessions with an abusive party. Court-mandated counseling between a victim and their abusive partner or

parent poses serious safety risks and may pressure victims to reunify with someone who harmed them. Current statute fails to adequately address family violence dynamics when ordering counseling in a Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship.

Additionally, certain modalities of counseling, such as family reunification therapy (FRT), have become popular in pockets across the state, but are not evidence informed. FRT in the context of family violence is not only extremely harmful to children who are ordered to complete it with the person who abused them, and sometimes their parent; it can also mean that the child is actively removed from the parent who fostered their safety for so long. It can include prolonged no-contact orders from their safe parent that potentially extends beyond the duration of the FRT itself.

HB 3783 makes significant strides in remedying these issues by ensuring that a history of family violence and sexual abuse is considered before family counseling is ordered. The court may not order family counseling if credible evidence of family violence or sexual abuse is presented and would also protect survivors from being ordered to pay for counseling. The bill also prohibits FRT practices, including the isolation of a child from their parent or family or community, overnight or multiple day stays in or out of state as part of counseling, transportation of a child by force or threat, a temporary or permanent change in periods of possession or access, and any use of force, threat, undue coercion or verbal against a child. This new law clearly asserts that no victim should have to participate in harmful counseling practices and that their safety, and the safety of their child, is of the utmost concern to our courts.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS ACROSS THE CONTINUUM: FROM SAFETY TO STABILITY & PREVENTION

TCFV BILLS OF NOTE

In the 89th session an extraordinary number of bills were filed that directly pertained to survivors of family violence and their children. Some addressed a continuum of safety needs, while others focused on the rights of survivors within those systems, or on prevention and economic stability. The bills on the following two pages reflect this range of support and protections for survivors, and each is a measure that TCFV supported via legislative action.

IMMEDIATE SAFETY:

- **SB 2196 (Sen. Johnson/Rep. Manuel):** Extends the duration of magistrate's emergency protective orders in family violence cases to 60-90 days, instead of the previous 30-60 day period. In cases involving the use of a weapon, the duration is 90-120 days. The extended time periods will allow survivors additional time to access services, implement safety plans, arrange for safe housing, and consider long-term safety and legal remedies.
- **HB 793 (Rep. Thompson/Sen. Zaffirini):** Ensures that courts *shall*, instead of *may*, keep a protective order applicant's mailing address, county of residence, and telephone number confidential upon their request. Courts must give notice to applicants that this is an option and must maintain a confidential record of the protected information.
- **SB 487 (Sen. Alvarado/Rep. Flores):** Amends the Code of Criminal Procedure to make provisions relating to pseudonym forms applicable to a person who is the subject of an offense that allegedly constitutes indecent assault or invasive visual recording or an offense that is part of the same criminal episode as such an offense.
- **HB 2492 (Rep. Bowers/Sen. Anchía):** Mandates a minimum four-hour holding period after bond is posted for those arrested on probable cause of family violence, providing time to safety plan.
- **HB 2073 (Rep. Hull/Sen. Huffman):** Increases penalties for violating protective orders or bond conditions when there is use of deadly force, making this consistent with other similar statutes.



SURVIVORS' RIGHTS:

- **SB 761 (Sen. Hinojosa/Rep. Thompson):** A priority of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), this bill focuses on crime victims' rights and enforcement of those rights. It includes a survivor's right to meaningful notice about court proceedings regarding their case, to be clearly informed that the prosecutor does not represent the survivor, and to have an attorney assert certain rights on the survivor's behalf and to be present during a forensic interview.
- **HB 3073 (Rep. Howard/Sen. Paxton):** Aligns the definition of consent with the existing definition under Penal Code, Sec. 1.07 which defines consent as assent in fact, whether express or apparent, and makes clear that an act is nonconsensual when the actor knows the other person is intoxicated or impaired, regardless of whether the actor intentionally impaired them or not.
- **HB 3745 (Rep. Manuel/Sen. Zaffirini):** Expands the Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) program by allowing for emergency financial awards on behalf of deceased victims and when the crime occurred during a declared state of emergency. This would expedite critical financial support.
- **SB 1559 (Sen. Zaffirini/Rep. Thompson):** Ensures that protective orders that were in place before or during a divorce or child custody case are transferred to the court overseeing those cases to reduce the risk of conflicting rulings, while maintaining the safety of survivors as a priority.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS ACROSS THE CONTINUUM: FROM SAFETY TO STABILITY & PREVENTION

TCFV BILLS OF NOTE (continued)

PREVENTION AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT:



- **HB 136 (Rep. Hull/Sen. Alvarado):** Ensures Medicaid coverage and reimbursement for lactation consultation services, expanding access to health resources, postpartum.
- **SB 1343 (Sen. Johnson/Rep. Harris Davila):** Led by Texas Appleseed, this bill ensures people know their rights and how to exercise them regarding data collection and privacy. It requires data brokers to provide clear, accessible notices on their websites or mobile applications that inform consumers of their data collection practices, including guidance on their rights.
- **SB 800 (Sen. Zaffirini/Rep. Wilson):** In orientation for first-year students and undergraduate transfer students on sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking policies, postsecondary educational institutions are required to include a video with the names, location and contact information of the institution's Title IX coordinators and offices and supportive community resources. Effective in the 2025-25 academic year.

TCFV'S ACTION AT THE LEGISLATURE



123

Legislative
actions taken



88

Cards dropped for
committee hearings



35

Oral testimonies
offered/facilitated

In addition to these actions, TCFV co-hosted Capitol Day in February in partnership with TAASA. Despite the cold, the day brought together over 200 advocates from across the state to the Texas Capitol. This year TCFV & TAASA also hosted its first survivor panel at Capitol Day with four incredible survivors, moderated by a survivor. The panelists spoke about their lived experiences and what legislative advocacy means to them.

As a domestic violence coalition, TCFV routinely takes on collaborative work with our partners and works closely with them during legislative session to support measures that keep Texans safer. TCFV thanks these agencies for also standing alongside us and knows that when the broader advocacy community stands together, we can create stronger laws in support of all survivors in our state. TCFV offers deep gratitude to the survivors, advocates, and partners who inspired, informed, and advocated alongside us, and everyone who supported TCFV's work in the 89th Legislative Session.



SURVIVOR ADVOCACY IN ACTION:

TCFV aims to inform and create legislation that will expand safety, rights and opportunities for survivors by working side by side with survivors to pass laws that are truly rooted in their voices and experiences. Whether it's drafting bills, offering testimony, sharing ideas, submitting a card or any number of other actions, survivors' voices are imperative to legislative change. TCFV holds supporting these voices as a key priority and is in awe of all who walked with us this session—it is undoubtable that each of you created a safer Texas.

OUR ADVOCACY CONTINUES: REFLECTIONS ON THE 89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

At TCFV, our commitment to survivors of family violence is unwavering, no matter the challenges or changing policy landscape. Texas has a strong history of leadership in the movement to end violence—we enacted the first state law recognizing coerced debt, we were the second state to implement school-based dating violence policies, and we frequently advance pioneering housing protections for survivors. We strive to hold out that a survivor is first and foremost a sister, mother, daughter, father, or son. We hope to create a state that recognizes that the 1 in 2 Texans who experience domestic violence are a brilliant light, by their own name, in the world - and not defined by terms associated with victimization or crime.

We aim to put our all behind positive legislative change and to ensure we stand up when legislation could harm survivors or their families. While this update highlights key legislation passed during the session, much of our advocacy happens behind the scenes—and this session saw a great deal of that vital work to uphold protections that create safety and to serve as an informant on a measure with an unintended consequence. Our dedication remains rooted in ensuring survivor safety, expanding access to services and options, and promoting long-term stability and well-being for survivors. This includes championing legislation that upholds these values and pushing back against or improving measures that threaten them. We will never tire of standing on the right side of history by supporting survivors.

GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

TCFV POLICY TEAM

Every member of the Policy Team makes this possible. These brilliant TCFV staff members put their all into passing laws to support survivors, and each played an important role and contributed immensely to TCFV's efforts at the 89th Legislature. We applaud these Team members and the incredible spirit, teamwork, and dedication they showed during this session! We extend appreciation to the entire TCFV team with special thanks to Gloria Aguilera Terry for her time and support throughout the legislative session and in our Public Policy Committee (PPC) process. Thanks to William West and Maria Jose Angelelli for their service on the PPC and Diane Bocklage for her BIPP support. .



The TCFV Policy Team: Lisa Medina, Barbra Grimmer, Erin Mayes, Krista Varney, Lauren Lluveras, Jen Mudge, Molly Voyles, Molly Thibodeaux, Ana Molina Amaya

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

TCFV is able to set a comprehensive legislative agenda thanks to our dedicated Public Policy Committee (PPC). The PPC is composed of a wide range of individuals with varied expertise in, experience with, and knowledge of family violence across Texas. This esteemed group includes



advocates, survivors, and other professionals. We commend and appreciate the participation of each Committee member, with special thanks to our co-chairs.



PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Staley Heatly, Wilbarger County Attorney
Sonia Corrales, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Houston Area Women's Center
Maricarmen Garza, American Bar Association

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Claudia Lopez, BCFS HHS
Kimberlee Parmer, Focusing Families
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STAY CONNECTED & SUPPORT OUR WORK

YOUR ENGAGEMENT FUELS OUR MISSION AND
HELPS BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES



Policy Action Towards Creating a Safer Texas



Legislative Updates and Resources

We work to actively support survivors through our legislative priorities. Click below to learn more about our current funding and bill priorities.



89th Legislative Session
Bills of Note

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Battering Intervention and
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