



TEXAS
ADVOCACY
PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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OUR VALUES

**COURAGE • EMPOWERMENT
INNOVATION • INTEGRITY**



TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Live free from abuse

800.374.HOPE

DECADES OF COMMITMENT TO TEXANS LIVING FREE FROM ABUSE

OUR MISSION | Texas Advocacy Project's mission is to end dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in Texas. Texas Advocacy Project empowers survivors through free legal services and access to the justice system, and advances prevention through public outreach and education.

Our vision is that all Texans *live free from abuse.*



WHO WE SERVE

Established in 1982 by a group of young lawyers, **Texas Advocacy Project** started as a legal hotline. In the decades since, TAP has evolved into an **expert on legal issues** affecting survivors of power-based abuse. Today, our **holistic approach** includes both **solutions and prevention**.

Our **solutions** consist of legal and social work services proven to **break the cycle of violence** and get victims to safety. We provide effective services like protective orders, termination of abusers' parental rights, child-custody modifications, as well as assistance with civil issues that affect abuse cases such as housing, employment, education, and financial empowerment. In an effort to advance our vision, **we serve ALL Texans** without regard to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, immigration status, or any other distinction.

Our team extends its impact through **prevention** work consisting of a network of **outreach and education** to the public and those that work with survivors including: domestic violence and sexual assault shelters, judges, prosecutors, crime victim services personnel, legal advocates, medical professionals, universities, and students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE BASICS

- Staff | 7-10
- Board of Directors | 11-13
- Financials | 15
- Major Donors & Member Rated | 16
- Advocates for Hope | 17-18
- Types of Power-Based Abuse | 19

SOLUTIONS

- Legal Action | 21-22
- Social Work | 23-24
- Stories & Words From Our Clients | 25-26

PREVENTION

- Outreach | 29-34
- Education | 35-36
- Policy | 37
- Coalitions | 38

EVENTS

- Black & White Ball | 41-42

WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED | 43



**In 2023,
Texas Advocacy
Project helped
11,047 clients and
their children
across Texas**

**In 2023, Texas
Advocacy Project
supported clients
from ages 10 to 93
years old**

**In 2023, 1,550
of TAP clients
and their family
members
received social
work services**

**Over half of U.S.
women and almost
1 in 3 U.S. men will
experience sexual
violence involving
physical contact
during their
lifetimes**

**Post-Covid research
out of UT found that**

- 1) survivors' greatest
unmet need is for
mental health
services and that**
- 2) more legal aid is
needed**

**1 in 9 girls
& 1 in 20 boys
will experience
sexual abuse or
assault before
they turn 18**

**Nearly 1 in 3
human trafficking
victims are
recruited by a
family member or
caregiver**



THE BASICS

TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT STAFF, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DONORS, & FINANCIALS

THE MANY **PEOPLE WHO MAKE UP AND SUSTAIN OUR ORGANIZATION**, AS WELL AS ENSURE THAT TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT IS A STEWARD OF EVERY DOLLAR DONATED

STAFF

SENIOR LEADERSHIP

We are extremely fortunate to have a leadership team with over **78 years of combined experience** in supporting survivors of abuse.



HEATHER BELLINO
Chief Executive Officer



DENISE MARGO MOY
Chief Operating Officer



BRONWYN BLAKE
Chief Legal Officer



JEREMY RATHKE
Chief Finance Officer



AMANDA ELKANICK ODER
Chief Advocacy &
Education Officer



MELISSA GRAY
Interim Chief Development
& Communications Officer

DEMOGRAPHICS

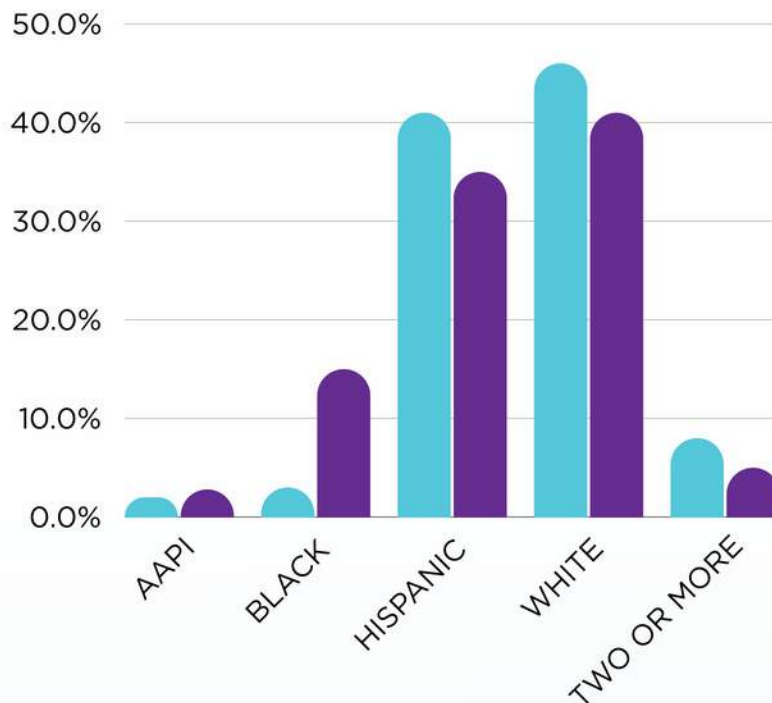
We believe our mission and vision are most effectively fulfilled with a staff and Board that is reflective of **Texas' diverse communities.**

EMPLOYEES

Our recruitment, hiring, and job training practices reflect a commitment to diversity and creating a welcoming space for all. We foster a workplace that respects each individual, and seeks and values diverse perspectives.

CLIENTS

TAP serves ALL Texans without regard to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, immigration status, or any other distinction. We create and implement programs using our awareness of cultural differences.



FELLOWS PROGRAM

KIARA STATON



The University of Texas at Austin School of Law

FAITH TREJO



SMU Dedman School of Law

The Texas Advocacy Project Fellows Program funds summer law clerks and first year staff attorneys from underrepresented backgrounds to join us in this work.

Most public interest positions for law students are unpaid, which undermines diversity and inclusion efforts. Nowhere is this more dire than in the fight to end gender-based violence! For example, Black women experience intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than that of white women; however, they are less likely than white women to use social services or go to the hospital because of domestic violence. **Culturally specific and culturally affirming legal services are essential.**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER YEAR IN REVIEW

What. A. Year. Every time I sit down to write this letter, I am truly in awe of what we, together, have accomplished at Texas Advocacy Project. **This year is no different! At TAP, our vision is that every Texan live free from abuse; our work this year expands that vision nationwide where, through partnerships, we are laying the foundation for a society that has zero tolerance of abuse of any kind.**

Thanks to our incredible staff, Board of Directors, and supporters, TAP has continued to provide legal and social services to victims of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, and child abuse **completely free of charge to victims.** In fact, because of this work, over 11,000 more Texans are living in safety!

A highlight of the year was our work on the United States Supreme Court case, U.S. v. Rahimi. The central concern in Rahimi was the fate of a 30-year-old federal law that prohibits the possession of firearms by persons subject to a domestic violence restraining order. Bronwyn Blake, our Chief Legal Officer, along with attorneys at Kelly Hart & Hallman, led a coalition of more than 20 nonprofit agencies in filing an amicus brief in the case urging the Supreme Court to uphold the federal law. **Bronwyn and I were honored to have seats in the courtroom to hear the Justices discuss domestic violence and protective orders – the tools our lawyers have been employing for decades to protect survivors – and it was encouraging to hear the arguments point towards a (hopefully) favorable outcome.** Being the only coalition of direct civil legal service providers presenting a brief, our unique perspective holds pivotal importance in shaping the final judgment in this case.

In 2023, we also expanded the services and awareness work we provide around human trafficking. **We began the year by hosting a statewide roundtable discussion at the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce where we engaged the business community to help support survivors of abuse.** The Dallas edition of the series highlighted the partnerships between TAP, Health and Human Services, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Dallas Police Department. In September, we hosted the second of our series, focusing on the impact of domestic violence and human trafficking on businesses in the state. We were honored to have First Lady Cecilia Abbott provide the opening remarks.

Our work in serving survivors of human trafficking has gained national attention! I attended the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Fighting Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector event in Washington, D.C., and have begun to build relationships with key leaders of the Not on Our Watch organization. I also travelled to Washington, D.C. to participate in a round table discussion with national leaders from the Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative (AII), Homeland Security, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Here are some more highlights from our 41st year:

- **The number of people our small but mighty team served is incredible!** Our legal team closed over 4,900 cases, bringing over 11,000 victims to safety, while our social workers assisted 1,600 victims. In addition, our Advocacy and Outreach department trained a record 6,500 people!

- TAP's work on the national stage to support survivors in every state has also grown tremendously this year. **Our national partnership base for referrals continues to expand**, allowing TAP to serve even more survivors.
- Amanda Elkanick Oder, TAP's VP of Advocacy & Outreach, presented at national and international conferences in San Diego, Atlanta, & New Orleans.
- I participated in a panel at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce with experts from the Office of Victims of Crime and University of Maryland to discuss how better to serve survivors through housing and employment issues.
- TAP is now seen as a **key expert stakeholder in the work around perinatal maternal health** and intimate partner violence, and is recognized as a thought leader by the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership in this area.
- Our very own Managing Social Worker, Sarah Lackey, was named St. Edward's Social Work Program's Field Instructor of the Year!
- During the 88th Texas Legislative Session, **we testified on 17 bills**, bringing the voice of our clients to decision-makers.
- One bill in particular, **the Natalia Cox Act (SB 1325), will have an immediate bearing on victims.** Natalia Cox was a college student at Huston-Tillotson University who was threatened with a gun by an abuser she was dating – although she called the police and felt unsafe because he knew where she lived, no one told her that she had a right to terminate her lease. Sadly, just a week later she was murdered. **The bill mandated that law enforcement provide notice of these rights to victims, and TAP, in partnership with HHSC and other agencies, created materials that are used today to provide this notice.** We are grateful to all of the legislators who worked through session to help the most vulnerable Texans!
- Our HOPE campaigns continue to grow! Our Teen Ambassadors of Hope campaign trained over 100 teens from all across Texas to be leaders in their communities around cultivating healthy relationships. Handbags for Hope sent over 2,987 handbags, diaper bags, and hospital bags to agencies across Texas, and over 1,800 backpacks were sent to 35 agencies across the state during our Backpacks for Hope campaign.
- Finally, our 17th Annual Black & White Ball presented by Accenture was a fabulous success, raising \$1.125 Million! **This unrestricted funding is what makes it possible for us to serve every victim who comes to us with no restrictions or qualifiers.**



Thank you for joining us in our growth and making this necessary work possible. I am eager to see what we can accomplish together in 2024!

Cheers,

Heather Bellino

Heather Bellino, Chief Executive Officer

TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT'S 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING
THEIR TIME, RESOURCES, & LEADERSHIP



Alison Watters, *Chair*
Self-Employed

Marybeth Schmitz, *Vice Chair*
Vista Equity Partners

Sherrill Morales, *CPA, Treasurer*
Atchley & Associates, LLP

Sharon Dobbs, *Attorney at Law, Secretary*
Retired — IBM Associate General Council

Jon Andrews
Accenture

Ginger Averitt
Eleve Cosmetics

Hope Bartolotta
Self-Employed

Scott Biscoe
Allstate

Marshall A. Bowen, *Attorney at Law*
Butler Snow LLP

Laura Broderick
Abrigo

Boran Buturovic
Center Coast Capital Advisors, LP

Hema Chugh
Dell

Reema Desai
Attorney at Law, Wiley

Thomas Graham
Crosswind Media & Public Relations

Amber Hausenfluck
McGuireWoods LLP

Lisa Jukes, M.D.
Modern Women's Health

Burke Kennedy, Attorney at Law
Savills

Kimberly Lasseter
Google

Lawrence Marchman
Biote Medical

Lynelle McKay
Consultant

Julia McKenzie
The Covalent Foundation

Scott Neuendorf
Luther King Capital Management

Rebecca Potts
Google

Jeannette Spinelli
Spinelli Residential Group

Kenny Thompson, Jr.
PepsiCo

Catalina Villegas
Major League Baseball

Jessica Warren, Attorney at Law
Warren Law

Ashley Womack
Alpha II

ADVISORY BOARD

- **Andrew Weber, Attorney at Law, Chair Emeritus**
- **Jose M. Rangel, Attorney at Law, Chair**
- **Peter Black**
- **Marla Broaddus, Attorney at Law**
- **Beryl Crowley**
- **Lawton Cummings**
- **Denise Davis, Attorney at Law**
- **Julie Graham**
- **MJ Hegar**
- **Erin Huddleston**
- **Matt Matthews, Attorney at Law**
- **Michael Marcin, Attorney at Law**
- **Marci Payne**
- **Leslie Rhode**
- **Susan Salch, Attorney at Law**
- **Alex Schoch, Attorney at Law**
- **Kelly Thorstad, M.D.**
- **Michelle Simpson Tuegel, Attorney at Law**
- **Julienne VanDerZiel**

IN 2023

369

**PEOPLE
VOLUNTEERED**

5,688

TOTAL HOURS

A NOTE FROM TAP BOARD CHAIR

2023 was a year filled with growth and progress at TAP. As our organization expanded, we made a deliberate effort to diversify our board to help plan even more strategically. **We brought in members with varied skills and experiences, including key individuals from tech giants like Google and Salesforce, Girl Scouts of America, and a myriad of other industries.** Talk about a dynamic bunch that not only care deeply about the work, but are helping the organization navigate its ambitious growth with unparalleled expertise! We also sought advice from external partners like KPMG and focus groups to help us identify potential blind spots and improve our strategies. These adjustments have further strengthened our ability to support and guide our CEO, Heather Bellino, as she leads Texas Advocacy Project and its staff of Justice Warriors to new heights while staying true to our core values.

Reflecting on my first encounter with TAP, a whole decade ago in 2014, I recall having some misconceptions, including thinking “So, it’s just a hotline??” However, I quickly learned that TAP is far more powerful and transformative than that and has since become a leader in the movement against violence. Through their holistic approach, TAP has become a lifeline for victims of abuse, offering a comprehensive safety net that extends far beyond a simple hotline.

I hope that in thumbing through this annual report, you’ll see, if only just a glimpse, into the many layers of Texas Advocacy Project and the life-saving impact they have on those in need. While the need for safety is universal, access to it unfortunately isn’t. Texas Advocacy Project provides that crucial access, for free, to anyone. Isn’t that truly remarkable?!

Alison Watters

Board of Directors, Chair





**“I am very blessed to have
this community in my corner.**

I do not know anyone that has been through this legal crisis so I feel a sense of relief just knowing that I will get pointed in the right direction so I can move forward with this process with the best confidence.”

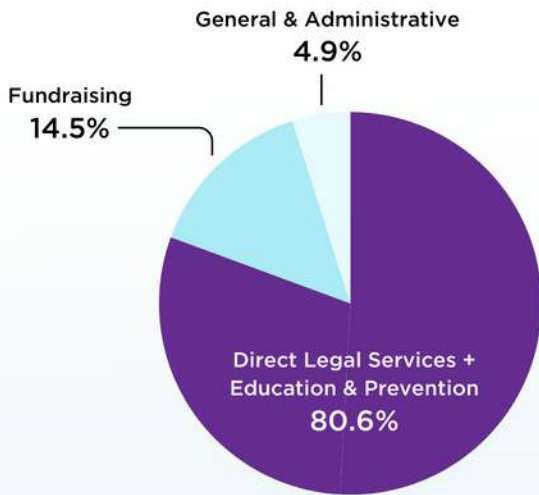
-TAP CLIENT

STEWARDS OF YOUR DOLLARS

2023 FINANCIALS

With our unique approach to braided funding, TAP is able to enhance our financial sustainability, mitigate risk, and maximize our impact. Our method of funding involves the strategic amalgamation of diverse funding sources from various organizations and individuals to support our mission. **This approach empowers us to diversify our funding streams and reduce our reliance on any single source of funding.** As a result, we gain greater flexibility and adaptability in delivering programs and services that cater to survivors. This has enabled us to develop more effective initiatives and services that generate a profound impact on the communities we serve.

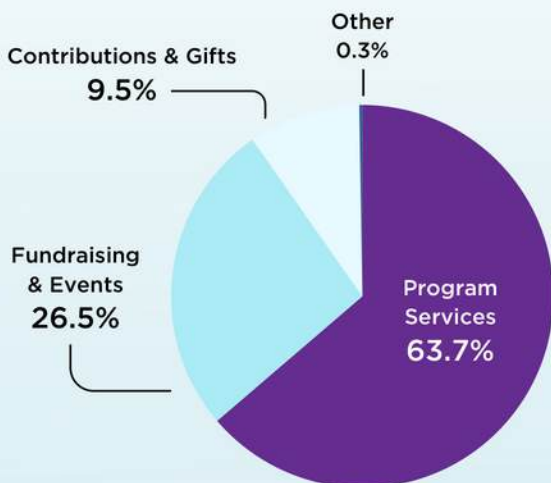
PROUDLY OPERATING ON **81% PROGRAM SERVICES COSTS** **&** **19% ADMIN COSTS**



EXPENSES

Program Services	
• Direct Legal Services	\$2,471,185
• Education & Prevention	\$1,445,449
Fundraising	\$703,359
General & Administrative	\$238,241

TOTAL \$4,858,284



REVENUE

Grants & Contracts	\$2,937,514
Events	\$1,223,872
Contributions & Gifts	\$436,824
Other	\$11,874

TOTAL \$4,610,084

MAJOR DONORS

- Accenture
- Alison & Tim Watters
- Biote
- Catherine & Joe Brophy
- Jamie & Curt Imber
- Jen & Matthew Bryce
- Kathy Grant & Jim Henson
- Kim & Matthew Domo
- Kimberly Lasseter
- Kirkland & Ellis
- Laura Broderick
- Lisa & Harry Jukes
- LGR Foundation Community Fund
- Lynn Bordelon
- Moody Foundation
- Office of the Attorney General of Texas
- Office of the Texas Governor
- Ronda Baird
- Rothell Charitable Foundation of Central Texas
- Sandy & David Strauss
- Sarah & James Shrewsbury
- Shield-Ayres Foundation
- Suzanne & Pat Pierson
- Terry Weber & Joe Mattioli
- Texas Access to Justice Foundation
- Texas Bar Foundation
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Thanhhao & Scott Neuendorf
- The Covalent Foundation
- The Dallas Foundation
- The University of Texas School of Law

MEMBER RATED

Texas Advocacy Project takes pride in achieving the highest rankings from both **GuideStar** and **Charity Navigator**. Our organization has been awarded GuideStar’s prestigious Platinum Seal of Transparency and Charity Navigator’s Four-Star rating. **We are honored to have also been recognized as the Best Place for Working Parents.** Our unwavering commitment to the highest level of transparency is reflected in our nonprofit profile on both GuideStar and Charity Navigator. We invite you to explore our profiles and learn more about our organization’s impact.



ADVOCATES FOR HOPE

TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT'S SUSTAINING GIVING CIRCLE

Power-based abuse in Texas must end. But we can't stop it alone. Our Advocates for Hope show the community that abuse of any kind—emotional, financial, physical, and sexual—cannot be tolerated. Join us in our vision that all Texans live free from abuse by joining our sustaining giving circle!

Become an Advocate for Hope by visiting TexasAdvocacyProject.org/donate or email Development@TexasAdvocacyProject.org.

MEMBER BENEFITS

- Name listed as an Advocate for Hope on our website and Black & White Ball program
- Subscription to our monthly e-newsletter, the Hope Herald
- Invitation to our annual Holiday Party
- 100% fully tax deductible contribution
- Logo lapel pin



WE APPLAUD THE DEDICATION OF OUR 2023 ADVOCATES FOR HOPE FOR HELPING TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF SURVIVORS

- **Becky Austen**
- **Cory Baker**
- **Meg Bailey**
- **Heather & Todd Bellino**
- **Catherine & Joseph Brophy**
- **Marla Broaddus**
- **Andrea Cavender**
- **Miguel DeLeon**
- **Lauren Dupuis**
- **Kristina & Jorge Elizondo**
- **Sylvia & David Fuller**
- **Julie & Jeff Graham**
- **Jody Glubke**
- **Melissa Gray**
- **Kathleen Hausenfluck**
- **Sarah & Jason Lackey**
- **Christine & Michael Marcin**
- **Janet Mitchell**
- **Katherine Mudge**
- **Jessica & Eric Moore**
- **Yolanda & Jose Rangel**
- **Alex Schoch**
- **Jessica Soter**
- **Steven Turner**
- **Julienne VanDerZiel**
- **VUKA**
- **Alison Walgren**
- **Linda & Leo Welsh**
- **Tina Rodriguez & Dr. Steven Wilkins**
- **Sasha Wytrwal**



TYPES OF POWER-BASED ABUSE



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.



DATING VIOLENCE

Violence, abuse, or power and control imbalances that occur in a romantic relationship.



SEXUAL ASSAULT

Actual, threatened, or attempted sexual contact with another person without that person's consent.



CHILD ABUSE

Also called child endangerment or child maltreatment, is physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child.



STALKING

Actions that make someone feel threatened, oppressed, or intimidated regardless of the relationship.



SOLUTIONS

LEGAL AND SOCIAL WORK SOLUTIONS

OUR SOLUTIONS CONSIST OF **LEGAL AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES PROVEN TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE** AND GET VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS TO SAFETY

SOLUTIONS THROUGH LEGAL ACTION



LAWYERS ON YOUR SIDE

Texas Advocacy Project's core power is in its legal expertise and experience dealing with power-based abuses. **We support our clients primarily through advice and counsel, assistance with protective orders including Magistrate's Order for Emergency Protection (MOEP's), assistance in pro se matters, and direct representation.** We also provide assistance with general civil issues that impact power-based abuse cases such as housing, employment, education, and immigration.



TELE-LAW

Our attorneys work directly with victims in person and utilizing tele-law (the distribution of legal services and information via electronic information and telecommunication technologies). **Tele-law allows long distance client and attorney contact, care, advice, reminders, education, and remote representation.** When rural settings, lack of transport, lack of mobility, or simply the lack of a legal aid office in a county blocks access to the justice system, tele-law bridges that gap.



SPECTRUM OF SERVICES

FLEXIBLE LEVELS OF LEGAL SERVICES TO ENSURE SURVIVORS ARE NOT TURNED AWAY

LEGAL LINE

The initial consultation.
Free and confidential
advice and counsel.

ASSISTED PRO SE

Providing survivors with
individualized, unbundled
legal assistance,
empowering survivors to
represent themselves
in court.

DIRECT REPRESENTATION

Attorneys stand next
to survivors in court
proceedings when cases
are too complicated to
navigate alone and the
barriers to justice are
too high.

THINKING BIG THROUGH IMPACT LITIGATION

When called for, our attorneys file impact litigation to bring about lasting change beyond one survivor's case. These cases create societal change and ensure future courts serve all survivors fairly. **SPECIALIZING IN LEGAL TOPICS THAT HELP COMBAT POWER-BASED ABUSE.**



LEGAL SOLUTIONS*

PROTECTIVE ORDERS

A court order that prevents an abuser from coming near the survivor, their residence or workplace, and/ or school of a survivor and a survivor's children. If an abuser violates this order, they can be arrested immediately.

CHILD CUSTODY / MODIFICATIONS / ENFORCEMENT / TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS / ADOPTION

No longer having to co-parent with an abuser, consult them for important decisions, or worry about who the child would live with in the event of a survivor's untimely death.

TITLE IX ADVOCACY

Legal support provided to a survivor to ensure their school, college, or university properly handles sexual assault or harassment claims, under Title IX.

COERCED DEBT RELIEF

Abusers often use control of finances to force victims to stay in an abusive relationship. In these instances, victims are forced to choose between facing economic hardship or staying with their abuser. Our financial empowerment tools help victims cope with financial abuse.

POST ARREST CRISIS CONSULTATIONS

Collaborating with Austin Police Department, TAP attorneys provide Crisis Consultation Services. Using trauma-informed skills, TAP attorneys contact victims after the arrest of their offender and offer assistance with safety planning and obtaining an Emergency Protective Order (EPO).

DIVORCE

Severing the ties. Permanently and legally separates survivors from their abusive spouses.

TRAUMA-INFORMED TRIAL PREP

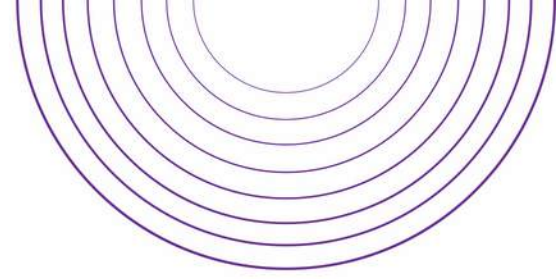
A trauma-informed approach begins with understanding the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the survivor. Using a trauma-informed lens, legal and social work staff work with clients to prepare them for the reality of appearing in court. By crafting services and programs that are sensitive and directly responsive to the trauma that many survivors experience after a violent crime, TAP attorneys identify and limit potential triggers to reduce re-traumatization and protect their clients' mental and emotional health.

CRIMINAL RECORD RELIEF

TAP attorneys work with survivors of human trafficking and other abuses to expunge criminal records resulting from survivors' victimization. Cleaning a survivor's record is necessary for securing employment, housing, education, and child custody - all critical elements in rebuilding one's freedom and securing sustainable independence. Our social work staff builds on this legal remedy by connecting survivors with the opportunities they are now eligible for.

**This list does not provide a comprehensive overview of all the legal services offered by Texas Advocacy Project.*

SOLUTIONS THROUGH SOCIAL WORK



TAP's social workers provide holistic, trauma-responsive care in collaboration with the legal staff. When safety concerns, overwhelming stress, and mental health needs are present, survivors may be unable to fully absorb the advice outlined by the legal staff. Social workers are able to step in and support survivors with these needs. After the successful launch of our Social Work Program in 2021, TAP hired additional social workers to create a strong team of three LMSWs.



TAP'S SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM IMPLEMENTS THE FOLLOWING METHODOLOGY:

STAFF EDUCATION

Each legal workgroup at TAP has a social worker. Embedding social workers in legal teams allows for interdisciplinary collaboration and wraparound services. Social workers help attorneys to see a client as a whole person, with unique and important strengths, protective factors, and needs. **Social workers also provide regular professional development trainings for staff, which guide the manner in which staff communicate with survivors and enhance legal outcomes.** Trainings have included Social Determinants of Health, High risk factors for lethality, and an introduction to Polyvagal Theory and how it can help staff improve their interactions with survivors.

CRISIS INTERVENTION & PERSONAL SAFETY PLANS

Clients' safety needs are evaluated with Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell's Danger Assessment. **Social workers guide clients to create individualized plans of action to reduce the risks they and their children face.** Safety planning occurs at any stage—whether a client is still with an abuser, is planning to leave an abuser, or has already left. Social workers also assist survivors in processing and understanding the effects of trauma through active listening, psycho-education, and validation. This is essential, as survivors commonly have a waiting period to access local counseling programs.



“[The social worker] was very helpful during our conversation and reassured me I was taking the right steps. **She followed up quickly with resources I needed and made sure I knew how to contact her** regarding any questions I may have about my case in the future.”

-TAP CLIENT



EMPOWERMENT COORDINATION

Survivors can be overwhelmed by the amount of agencies reaching out to them and asking them to complete various tasks during one of the hardest times in their lives. **Social workers help survivors to understand and navigate the various systems they are intersecting with, such as law enforcement, courts, Office of the Attorney General, and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.** Social workers assist survivors to regain control and autonomy by providing housing, financial, and mental health resources. TAP utilizes community partnerships by providing warm referrals to external service providers. This means that with a client's consent, we can contact a partner agency on their behalf, lowering the rate of re-traumatization in having to tell one's trauma story to multiple agencies.

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

TAP partners with local universities to provide practicum placements (internships) for Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work students. This furthers the reach of our team and provides invaluable experience for the students. These educational partnerships have allowed for innovative virtual programming for TAP clients. **TAP Social workers and interns provide accessible workshops and support groups based on the needs of clients.** Programming has included a Circle of Security Parenting Support Group and Financial Empowerment Workshops addressing emotions about money after financial abuse, making a budget, and understanding one's credit score. In addition, **Social Work interns were pivotal in launching our Client Services Evaluation Program.**



**Sarah
Lackey**
TAP MANAGING
SOCIAL WORKER



SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM'S
FIELD INSTRUCTOR
OF THE YEAR

IN 2023, OUR
SOCIAL WORK
TEAM PROVIDED
SERVICES TO
636 PRIMARY
SURVIVORS
& SUPPORTED
1,550
CLIENTS AND
CHILDREN
ACROSS THE STATE

STORIES & WORDS FROM OUR CLIENTS

JOCELYN'S STORY

2023 COURAGE AWARD HONOREE

Jocelyn met her abuser shortly after beginning college. At the time, she was active in MMA and studying engineering and physics. Her life took an unexpected turn when she broke her leg during a training session. Unable to pursue the things she loved; Jocelyn fell into a depression.

Her abuser relished in her despair, using it as a means to control and manipulate her. Jocelyn believed that marriage might mend the fractures in their relationship, clinging to the hope that things could improve. However, **her abuser's violent tendencies only escalated, and the birth of their child marked a traumatic turning point.**

During birth, Jocelyn experienced serious medical complications resulting in significant injury. **Just two weeks after her son was born her abuser sexually assaulted her in their home.** Their disputes grew increasingly physical, prompting Jocelyn to seek a divorce. She consulted a divorce attorney who required a \$6,000 retainer, which felt insurmountable, as Jocelyn's abuser had full control of their finances. **Determined to escape the abusive relationship, Jocelyn returned to school to pursue a finance degree, setting her sights on financial independence.**

Balancing her studies with motherhood, she fought tirelessly to secure a better future for herself and her son who she feared would one day become his father without intervention. Working long hours at a prestigious accounting firm during busy seasons became her escape from the turmoil at home.

When the pandemic forced her to work from home, her situation became untenable. **Fearful that she might become another statistic among murdered abuse victims, Jocelyn decided it was time to take action.** After three years, she established financial independence, secured her own apartment, and returned to MMA to get her fighting spirit back for the divorce proceedings.

Throughout the separation and divorce proceedings, her abuser continued his relentless harassment. Jocelyn realized she would need a protective order from her abuser to find safety for her and her son. After the DA's office refused to help her and her divorce attorney requested another retainer she could not afford, Jocelyn found Texas Advocacy Project (TAP). **TAP helped her navigate a grueling legal battle, resulting in a lifetime protective order against her abuser.** When her abuser continued to violate the lifetime protective order after the fact, TAP stepped in to enforce the order and keep Jocelyn and her son safe.

Jocelyn and her son are finally free from her abuser. She no longer worries about the influence her abuser will have on her son and is picking back up on the dreams she left behind.

*"[The attorney] was absolutely amazing. I've been stressing so much over my situation and felt like I just wasn't being heard by anyone. **But after I spoke with [the attorney], I had such a burden lifted.** I am so thankful for all of the advice and tools she gave me!"*

-TAP CLIENT

*"They are very good at hearing your 100 words and breaking it down to one simple answer. Helping me keep and stay calm. **Without your services there's no way I'd get through this hard time.**"*

-TAP CLIENT

CYNTHIA'S STORY*

Cynthia, mother of three, reached out to TAP's legal line seeking guidance on divorcing her abusive husband, who resides in Mexico. **Enduring emotional abuse, verbal attacks, and infidelity, Cynthia also faced the complexities of international law** governed by treaties like the Hague Convention, which can make divorces complicated and time-consuming. Despite her desire to finally be free from her abuser, Cynthia felt overwhelmed by the prospect of navigating the American legal system as a Spanish speaker.

Encouraged by TAP, **she joined our Assisted Pro Se (APS) program, where she received invaluable support from our legal team as Cynthia prepared to represent herself in court.**

Her first hurdle was serving divorce papers to her abuser overseas. Her TAP attorney's innovative solution, a waiver of service prepared by TAP, streamlined the process and empowered Cynthia to proceed with the case. To ensure she was well prepped for the final hearing, her TAP attorney advised Cynthia on everything including which phone numbers to call for next steps, how to draft emails to court personnel, how to address the judge, and even what to wear for court.

Following tons of preparation and support, Cynthia successfully finalized her divorce after a courageous hearing! Today, Cynthia lives peacefully in safety, caring for her children and mother.

*"Thankful they reached out to me. **I did not have to fight to be seen or heard.**"*

-TAP CLIENT

MELODY'S STORY*

Melody is a resilient single mother who faces the daily challenges of providing for her two precious children. Her journey has been marked by immense strength, as she endured harrowing abuse during her pregnancy, an experience her son tragically witnessed. Despite the hurdles, **Melody's determination shone through, leading her to secure a lifetime Protective Order after her abuser repeatedly violated her Emergency Protective Order.** This vital step has brought safety and peace into her life, shielding her and her children from further terror.

*"The lady I spoke with to schedule was very kind, patient, and compassionate. It was very welcomed after repeated "nos" from local attorneys that I have reached out to, as I can't afford even consult fees. **I feel hope for the first time in a while regarding legally closing an awful chapter in my life.**"*

-TAP CLIENT

LEXI'S STORY*

Lexi and her children have faced unimaginable challenges, enduring the shadow of horrific violence over the past two years, all while courageously evading her abuser. **Thanks to the compassionate support of TAP attorneys, Lexi was able to initiate divorce proceedings without compromising her safety by revealing her location.** Now, she is steadfastly focused on preserving the well-being of herself and her children.

*"Going through this experience has been overwhelming and confusing. **Being able to talk to an attorney with Texas Advocacy Project was helpful and empowering.** Thank you very much for helping me turn my doubts into knowledge."*

-TAP CLIENT

*Client's name changed to protect identity.



"I felt very empowered in the room with my abuser.

I hadn't felt that way in such a long time. Thank you so much for your guidance..."

-TAP CLIENT



PREVENTION

OUTREACH, EDUCATION, & POLICY

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY- INCLUDING MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, JUDGES, TEENAGERS- **ON HOW THEY CAN HELP PREVENT ABUSE** TO ADVANCE OUR VISION THAT ONE DAY ALL TEXANS WILL *LIVE FREE FROM ABUSE*

PREVENTION THROUGH OUTREACH

TEEN  AMBASSADORS
OF H O P E



Teen Ambassadors of Hope is a statewide leadership campaign designed to equip teens to influence positive change around healthy relationships and teen dating violence prevention.

Through continued training and support from TAP staff and outside leadership coaches, Teen Ambassadors gain valuable resources and tangible information on promoting safe and healthy relationships while raising awareness and funds in support of TAP's mission.

AMBASSADOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend TAoH Orientation in-person or virtually to gain a foundational knowledge of ways to cultivate healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence.
- Build a business plan to raise funds (\$500 goal encouraged) and awareness for TAP's mission and services.
- Contribute meaningfully to TAoH by actively participating in virtual trainings, discussion topics, and community-building events.



IN 2023
102 TEEN AMBASSADORS
RAISED
\$37,808



Handbags for Hope

Our Handbags for Hope campaign partners with the community to collect new purses, gender-neutral tote bags, and diaper bags for survivors across Texas.

This campaign helps to lead those experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual assault to safety and free legal and social services. Each bag is fitted with a discreet tag that lists TAP's toll-free legal line 800-374-HOPE and safety planning information. All bags are then distributed to shelters, clinics, and crisis centers across Texas.

43 COLLECTION PARTNERS

Affordable Luxury Group Dallas College • Alpha Kappa Alpha Austin Alumni Chapter • American Campus Communities • Atria Senior Living Center • Austin Marriott North in Round Rock • Biscoe Insurance Group • ButterCup Dental • Caldwell CSCD • Catherine Lee & Friends • Cedar Park Police Department • The Thankful Hubbard Chapter of The Daughters of the American Revolution • David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church • Diakonos • GET MAD • Hand and Stone Massage and Facial Spa • Zion Baptist Church Hope Ministry • Keller Williams • Kensington Electronic, INC • Leander Police Department Crisis Response Unit • Leander United Methodist Church • Methodist Hospital • Miller Consulting • Millisporesigma • Mount Zion Baptist Church • Rapid Orthopedics Supplies • Round Rock Police Department • RT Specialty • Salesforce • Shop LC • SmileOn Orthopedics • Society of Personality Assessment • St. Agnes Academy • Texas Capital Bank • Texas Department of Insurance • The Wainright-Spikes Group • Travis Constable Precinct 5 • Travis County Sherriff's Office • Waterloo Ice House

2,179

HANDBAGS GENDER-NEUTRAL TOTES & DIAPER BAGS DISTRIBUTED



backpacks FOR HOPE

Our Backpacks for Hope campaign partners with the community to collect new backpacks and school supplies for children of survivors who currently reside in domestic violence shelters across Texas.

Similar to Handbags for Hope, each backpack is fitted with a discreet tag that lists TAP's toll-free legal line, safety planning information, and of course, new school supplies to help these kiddos, elementary through high school ages, start off the new school year just like every other kid.

80 COLLECTION PARTNERS

360 UNO • Abrigo • Affordable Luxury Group • Animal Emergency Clinic NE • Arm, Inc. • Austin Asset • Bayland Community Center • Biscoe Insurance Group • Canva • Cedar Park Police Department • Chris Gets You Fit • Crate and Barrel (Dallas) • CryoOne • Crystal Falls HOA • Dell Technologies • E. Wildman Gallery • Edward Jones • Fonteno Senior Education Center • Glazier Senior Education Center • Harris County Precinct 5 Constables Office • Hays County Democratic Party • Healthcare Reality • Hockley Community Center • Kanga's Indoor PlayCenter • Kat Cotroneo • Keller Williams Lake Travis • Keystone Bank • Kimberly Curb Bridenstine Allstate Group • Kirkland and Ellis • Dr. Lisa M. Jukes & Modern Women's Health • McGuireWoods • MoakCasey • National Charity League South Austin Wildflowers • Oaks Garden Church • Peckham Aquatic and Fitness Center • Precinct 5 Constable Victim Assistance Office Houston • Radack Community Center • Shop LC • Spectrum Mobile • Spinelli Residential Group • St. Stephen's Missionary Baptist Church • Texas Children's Pediatrics • Texas Work Force Commission • Thankful Hubbard Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution • The Kenzie at the Domain • The Kynlee Foundation • Tracy Gee Community Center • Travis County Neighborhood HOA • Weekley Community Center • Fairmont Austin

1,753

BACKPACKS WITH SCHOOL SUPPLIES SENT TO KIDS IN SHELTER





Hope for the Holidays

Our Hope for the Holidays campaign provides holiday gifts and warm meals to survivor-clients and their families.

All families are nominated by our attorneys and are past TAP clients who we have helped through our civil legal remedies. TAP partners with the community to give these families a holiday to remember by fulfilling each family's dream wish list.

2023 PARTNERS

Whole Foods
Dry Force
ADA Diamonds
Holland & Knight

**ALL 6 FAMILY'S
WISH LISTS WERE
MET AND GIFTS
DELIVERED IN
TIME FOR THE
HOLIDAYS**



PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION

At Texas Advocacy Project, we firmly believe that education is a vital component of empowering survivors to access the resources they need. When our communities know better, they can do better. Our team is dedicated to sharing best practices on legal systems, including recent legislative changes that impact survivors, and equipping individuals with knowledge on incorporating trauma-responsive and holistic services. **By imparting knowledge, we are paving the way for communities to make positive changes and better support those affected by power-based abuse.**

Throughout 2023, Texas Advocacy Project received numerous invitations to present at national conferences, where we were able to showcase our exemplary service delivery model to stakeholders from across the country. We continue to host online, on-demand training courses on [Teachable](#) for the public over a variety of topics, including our survivor-focused trainings aim to educate individuals on their victim rights.



TRAINING CONFERENCES

We were proud to serve as expert presenters at the following conferences:

REGIONAL & STATE CONFERENCES

- Department of Family and Protective Services: Partners in Prevention Conference
- Ft. Bend County Crime Victims Conference
- Champion for Children Conference
- Every Victim, Every Time Conference
- Texas Association of Student Councils Conference & Advisors Workshop
- Healthy Futures Symposium
- Association of Texas Midwives Midwifery Conference
- Texas Victim Services Association Conference
- Texas WIC Nutrition & Breastfeeding Conference
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault Conference
- South Texas Social Workers Society
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid Cross Training Conference
- Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness
- Webb County DV Coalition Conference
- Trauma Support Services Conference
- Texas School Safety Center School Based Law Enforcement Intermediary Course
- Texas Association of Future Educators Teach Tomorrow Summit
- National Association of Residential Property Managers: Texas Chapter

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

- National Youth Advocacy & Resilience Conference
- Society for Personality Assessment Conference
- Conference on Crimes Against Women
- Southern Regional Education Board Making Schools Work Conference
- San Diego International Summit on Violence, Abuse and Trauma Across the Lifespan
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Conference
- ConferenceDirect's CD Forum

IN 2023 TAP EDUCATED
7,496
 INDIVIDUALS ACROSS TEXAS
 INCLUDING 1,907 TEENAGERS

1,074
 TEACHABLE
 COURSES
 COMPLETED
 IN 2023



MOU PARTNERS

142 MOU'S ACROSS THE NATION AS OF 2023

We strongly believe in the importance of developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with other organizations as part of our unwavering commitment to supporting survivors of power-based abuse. Our MOUs foster collaboration and partnership, establishing formal agreements that allow us to work closely with shelters, law enforcement agencies, counseling centers, and healthcare providers. By forging these meaningful connections, we can communicate more effectively, deliver services more efficiently, and share valuable resources.

The MOUs we have established enable us to provide survivors with comprehensive support through seamless referrals and coordinated services, ensuring that no gaps exist in the assistance they receive. Through streamlined processes, avoiding unnecessary duplication, and harnessing the collective knowledge and resources of our partners, **we enhance our effectiveness in addressing the systemic issues surrounding power-based abuse and in caring for every individual we serve.**

In 2023 alone, TAP added 17 partners to our growing list:

ALIGHT (Alliance to Lead Global Impact on Global Human Trafficking) • An-Nisa • Bay Area Turning Point • Boat People SOS (BPSOS) • Brazoria County Sheriff's Office • City of Houston Mayor's Office • Empower Her Network • Every Body Texas • Galveston Co-Care • Galveston Houston Immigrant Representation Project (GHIRP) • Harris County Community Services Department • La Posoda Home • Magdelene House Austin • New Friends New Life • The Beacon of Downtown Houston • The Heights Ellis County Family Resources • Unbound Now



PREVENTION THROUGH POLICY

At Texas Advocacy Project, **we know that effective advocacy in the public policy sphere amplifies our capacity to create lasting change for the survivors and communities we serve.** By engaging with our democratic process to design practical, constructive policy, we are working towards a reality where all Texans live free from abuse.

The commitment to safeguarding survivors' interests at the Capitol continues year-round. CEO Heather Bellino and VP of Advocacy & Outreach Amanda Elkanick Oder have continued working with key policy entities including the Office of the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the Texas Council on Family Violence's Public Policy Committee, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's Policy and Advocacy Team, and Texas Appleseed's Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt.

Thanks to TAP's braided funding stream, we occupy a unique position as the sole legal services provider in Texas capable of advocating for all victims and survivors. **In the 88th Texas Legislative Session, organization leaders provided testimonies on 17 bills, effectively channeling the voices of their clients to decision-makers.**

In January, **Heather participated in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Fighting Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector and round table discussions with leaders from the Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative (ATII), Homeland Security, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office in Washington, D.C., underscoring TAP's growing influence and commitment to combating human trafficking at both state and national levels.**



A standout moment of the year was our involvement in the United States Supreme Court case, U.S. v. Rahimi. This case scrutinized a federal law prohibiting firearm possession by individuals under domestic violence restraining orders. Led by CLO Bronwyn Blake, in collaboration with attorneys from Kelly Hart & Hallman, **TAP spearheaded a coalition comprising over 20 nonprofit organizations. Together, we submitted an [amicus brief](#) urging the Supreme Court to uphold the federal law, emphasizing its critical role in safeguarding survivors.** Attending the courtroom proceedings was an honor for Bronwyn and Heather, providing insights into the legal discourse around domestic violence issues and the potential positive outcome for victims.

In September, we were honored to convene with **Texas business leaders alongside Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott** to delve into the significant bills passed during the legislative session and the ongoing efforts to eradicate abuse across the Lone Star State. Through this collaboration, we sought to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by survivors and the role of businesses in creating safer environments for all Texans by staying up to date on the latest policy protections.



The Texas Stalking Project



Travis County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

PREVENTION THROUGH COALITIONS

TAP is proud to be part of **43 task forces, coalitions, response teams, and networks** across the state in collaboration with other organizations to be at the forefront of power-based abuse and systemic change.



Raise Your Paddle!

\$10,000

EVENTS

BRINGING ADVOCATES TOGETHER

FROM FUNDRAISERS TO EDUCATIONAL EVENTS, TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT STRIVES TO **BRING SUPPORTERS TOGETHER TO SPREAD AWARENESS AND RAISE FUNDS, ALL WHILE IN GOOD COMPANY**

Coming Together to Support Survivors *Statewide Roundtable Series - Dallas*



Diamonds Direct Austin Shop for a Cause



Coming Together to Support Survivors *Statewide Roundtable Series - Austin*



The Amazing Pursuit: A Scavenger Hunt Across Austin, TX





ACCENTURE PRESENTS
BLACK & WHITE
Ball

Leaders in the legal, medical, governmental, consulting, finance, and technology fields joined together at the 17th annual Black & White Ball for an evening of live music, dancing, Mystery Gifts, and Live Auction.

\$1.125 MILLION
OF UNRESTRICTED FUNDING
RAISED IN ONE NIGHT!





COURAGE AWARD HONOREE

Jocelyn endured serious physical, sexual, and financial abuse for years at the hands of her abuser. With help from Texas Advocacy Project, **she secured a lifetime protective order against her abuser**, as well as a divorce, and returned to her dreams with her children, *free from his influence.*

Jocelyn was honored with the 2023 Courage Award the evening of the Ball. Our annual Courage Award honors the inspiring journey of a client who embodies the courage needed to stand up to an abuser and seek help, as well as the determination to advocate and fight for a future of freedom. ***Read her courageous story on page 25.***

2023 BLACK & WHITE BALL COMMITTEE

EVENT CHAIR: Catherine Brophy

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Beth Almost
- Andrea Cavender
- Tanya Dorsett
- Leta Dorsett
- Kristina Elizondo
- Cathy Hale
- Leslie Huffhines
- Kristen Hummel
- Jennifer Martin
- Melissa Merhar-Parker
- Melissa Nickens
- Suzanne Pierson
- James Shrewsbury
- Sarah Shrewsbury
- Angela Smith
- Alison Watters
- Kaeleen Weiser

WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

By donating, partnering, volunteering,
or just becoming better informed,
you can help bring about a day when
all Texans live free from abuse.



DONATE

Donors help ensure that critical legal services are available, free of charge and when they are most urgently needed.

[DONATE TODAY](#)



GET EDUCATED

We provide free training to judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, educators, students, military members, health care providers, and the general public.

[LEARN WITH US](#)



VOLUNTEER

Volunteers directly support the many services Texas Advocacy Project provides. Opportunities are available for a variety of educational, professional, and personal backgrounds.

[VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME](#)



TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Live free from abuse

800.374.HOPE



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