

TCFV Legislative Advocacy Toolkit

Guidance for engaging in policy action that
centers survivors of domestic violence



INDIVIDUALLY WE POWER CHANGE.
TOGETHER WE POWER A MOVEMENT.

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What is Legislative Advocacy?

Legislative advocacy is using our voices and actions to influence the laws that shape our lives, communities and systems. At TCFV, we advocate with the state and federal legislatures to support and create access to safety, justice and opportunity for all survivors of domestic violence (DV).

Our lawmakers work for the people and they rely on their constituents to help guide the legislation filed in this state. It is imperative that survivors and advocates working alongside survivors have the opportunity to share their voice, experiences and expertise in the legislative process to create changes to our laws and systems that center survivors of DV.

We offer this guide to assist in understanding the how and why of legislative advocacy in Texas as well as how to engage in legislative advocacy efforts on your own and with TCFV!

TCFV's Legislative Advocacy is Built On...

- ▶ **Being Survivor Led.** Centering our advocacy on survivor voices, agency, and liberation guides TCFV's advocacy.
- ▶ **Sharing Information, Experiences & Stories.** Statistics and research play a vital role in demonstrating why a need or issue is worthy of attention. Personal stories and experiences can drive home the real-world impact of the need or issue. Stories are often the most compelling advocacy tool.
- ▶ **Establishing and Maintaining Relationships.** Partnering with legislators and other organizations who have shared goals can create true change. These relationships support us in carrying out collaborative advocacy efforts across different fields, professions, regions, and communities.
- ▶ **Focusing on Solutions.** Communicating the specific changes we want legislators to make, such as proposing an idea or supporting a bill, provides an avenue for tangible progress.
- ▶ **The Intersection of DV with All Areas of Life.** This includes privacy and safety protections, economic and housing stability, health and behavioral health, child protection and custody, crime victims' rights, criminal and civil legal systems, firearms transfers, offender accountability, and prevention.

TCFV aligns its policy work with its [mission](#), values, and a policy platform that prioritizes systems change, prevention and culture shifts, and centering marginalized survivors' access to support and response systems.

TCFV's Values are:

- Survivor = Expert
- Intersectional
- Prevention is Foundational
- Trauma-Informed
- Transformative
- Integrity and Transparency
- Responsive
- Collaborative & Innovative

What is the Legislative Process in Texas?

Understanding the basic legislative process in Texas can be a helpful first step in deciding how you want to engage in legislative advocacy. If you want to learn more or get a refresher, read on!

Basics of the Texas Legislature

- The Texas Legislature is bicameral, meaning it consists of two chambers: the Texas Senate, made up of 31 Senators, and the Texas House of Representatives, which includes 150 members.
- The Legislature meets every two years, as required by the Texas Constitution, and begins on the second Tuesday in January. During “regular” legislative session, which lasts up to 140 calendar days, lawmakers can propose and file bills, however the legislators only constitutional obligation is to pass a budget. The legislature can adjourn early if they complete their work.
- The Governor can convene a “special session” after regular session, lasting no more than 30 days. In a special session, the Governor sets the topics to be addressed and legislators can only pass laws related to these topics.

How a Bill Becomes Law

- A bill can be filed in either the House or Senate, but it must pass through both chambers in order to be sent to the Governor’s office where it will be signed, vetoed, or allowed to become law without signature. A bill can also be amended as it moves through the legislative process.
- Please read [The Legislative Process in Texas](#) for more detailed information about the lawmaking process. Also, the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities has a helpful infographic on [How a Bill Becomes a Law in Texas](#).

Texas Lege Fact:
Many bills are filed every session, in the tens of thousands, but few will pass—on average around 10%.

Where Can You Find Key Information About the Legislature?

Know Your Legislators

- Find out who represents you and/or your organization's service area(s) at [Who Represents Me?](#)

Track Bill Status

- If you want to know what is happening with a particular bill, and how it is moving (or not!) through the legislative process, the [Texas Legislature Online \(TLO\)](#) offers a variety of capabilities, including reading bill text and bill amendments, [looking up a bill's status](#), [how to follow a bill](#), [looking up committee hearings](#), setting up customized [bill alerts](#) or [committee notice alerts](#), links to committee hearing videos, legislative activity for the day, and much more. From TLO's home page, under Legislative Activity, you can also find ways to watch hearings live and via archived footage.
- Check out [TLO's FAQ section](#) for other questions you might have.

Information Specific to the Senate and House

- In addition to the many resources TLO offers, you can find detailed information on members of the House of Representatives and Senate, as well as committee membership, committee hearing broadcasts (live and archived videos), and much more at the [Texas House of Representatives](#) and [Texas Senate](#) websites.

Capitol Maps and Parking

- The Capitol Building is located at [1100 Congress Ave., Austin TX 78701](#). There are a variety of [Capitol Maps & Parking Maps](#) you can download to find your way around the building or to review parking options. The closest parking garage is the [Capitol Visitors Parking Garage](#) which is located at 1201 San Jacinto Blvd., Austin TX 78701.

Learn About the State Budget

- The [Legislative Budget Board \(LBB\)](#) has several responsibilities, which include preparing a General Appropriations Bill draft (usually is Senate Bill 1 or House Bill 1), preparing a budget estimates document, reviewing programs and operations of state established entities and preparing a performance report, conducting comprehensive reviews of school districts' educational, financial and operational services and programs, and preparing fiscal notes and impact statements on proposed legislation, among other tasks.
- View the current [2024-25 Texas State Budget](#) passed in 2023 in the 88th legislative session.

Why is Legislative Advocacy Important?

There are many reasons why we engage in legislative advocacy and attempt to create laws and policies that lead to safer, more empowered communities. Our passion, lived experiences and/or professional work can motivate us to advocate for change, but it's also normal to wonder about the impact of our actions. Below are frequently asked questions about engaging in legislative advocacy.

Is Legislative Advocacy a Good Use of My Time?

Lawmakers listen to their constituents and the contact you have with a legislator and/or their staff is noted to keep track of constituent feedback on issues. The legislative process determines how resources are allocated and rights are protected. By engaging in advocacy, individuals and organizations can influence these decisions to better reflect the needs and values of their communities. Your voice, knowledge, and point of view is worth sharing!

Survivors who have been directly affected by domestic violence and the advocates who walk alongside them are the experts who are best positioned to inform legislators' decisions and make a lasting impact. We want to ensure that lawmakers who vote on issues affecting survivors (which is all lawmakers!) have the information they need to create laws that are survivor-centered.

Can I Make a Difference Contacting My Representatives?

While TCFV has a large policy team, we can only truly affect change through the collaborative legislative advocacy we do in partnership with survivors, advocates, family violence programs, partners, and other Texans who are willing to take action to create safer communities. Legislative advocacy seeks to address systemic issues by promoting laws that create widespread solutions. These systemic changes are possible when we as individuals and groups make our voices heard. Each of us has a unique story to share about how domestic violence has impacted us personally and/or professionally. Stories, as well as data and targeted information we share can have a significant influence on lawmakers, and shape the reality in which we live.

I Work at a Nonprofit Agency. Can I Engage in Legislative Advocacy?

Yes! While legislative advocacy should be approached with care and thoughtfulness, nonprofits can participate in a variety of legislative advocacy activities. According to [Bolder Advocacy](#), who offers a wealth of expertise and trainings on nonprofit policy advocacy, including [resources specific to Texas](#): “Public charities in Texas can and should engage in lobbying to influence public policy and protect the interests of their communities. The Internal Revenue Code (federal law) permits lobbying by 501(c)(3) public charities, subject to generous limits. Texas state law also allows public charities to lobby, but if organizations or their staff are compensated to lobby or spend money to do so, they may need to register with the state as a lobbyist and disclose their lobbying activities.” (From: [Public Charities Can Lobby in Texas: How Is Lobbying Defined?](#), [Bolder Advocacy](#))

According Bolder Advocacy, there are many activities 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations can do without registering the agency as a lobbyist, including:

Regulatory Efforts	Research	Influencing Corporations	Getting to Know Your Legislators
Public Education	Educating Legislators	Nonpartisan Voter Education	Educational Conferences & Trainings

In some cases, nonprofits will need to register as a lobbyist, if an individual staff person exceeds certain compensation levels and hours of work for lobbying activities. Please read [Public Charities Can Lobby in Texas: How to Measure Your Lobbying Limits](#) for more detailed information on lobbying limits in Texas. It should also be noted that nonprofit agencies cannot engage in partisan support or opposition of a specific candidate or group of candidates running for office (even if they are not party affiliated). Bolder Advocacy’s [Practical Guidance: What Nonprofits Need to Know About Lobbying in Texas](#) is a helpful comprehensive guide on nonprofit legislative advocacy and lobbying.

For your finance team, gauge your level of compliance with federal and state tracking and reporting requirements using the [Advocacy Check-up: Nonprofit Self-Assessment](#). This tool was created for 501(c)(3) public nonprofits by Bolder Advocacy. You can also reach out to Bolder Advocacy to schedule a training for your organization!

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Establishing a Relationship With Your Legislator

- **Know who represents you.** It's completely normal to not know who represents you if you are new to legislative advocacy! Fortunately, you can easily find your legislators here:

- [Common Cause](#)
- [Who represents me? \(TX\)](#)
- Once you know who represents you, check out the links below to find your legislator's contact information at the Capitol and district office.
 - [Texas House of Representatives](#): Click on "Members" then search for your Representative by name
 - [Texas Senate](#): Click on "Senators", then "Members" and then you can search for your Senator sorted by district or name.

If you work for a family violence center or another survivor-serving organization, you can check to see which legislators represent the counties your agency serves. These legislators will be interested in what you have to say because you support survivors in their district. When meeting with them, you should make clear the organization you work for or are representing is in their district and serves their constituents.


- **Making Initial Contact with Your Legislator.** If you are seeking to meet your legislator for the first time, you can set an initial meeting with the intention to get to know one another. Contact your lawmaker's Capitol office or district office to schedule a meeting. [See Appendix D for a Meeting Request Email Template.](#) You can call or email to make contact but either way, you will likely not be able to speak to the legislator when you first reach out. To schedule a meeting, a great person to ask to meet with in the Capitol office is the Legislative Director or Chief of Staff, or in the District office you can ask for the scheduler to request an in-district meeting with the legislator. Below are some opportunities for meetings including but not limited to office visits:

- ▶ **Office Visits:** Visiting your elected official or their staff in his or her home district office is a great way to begin an ongoing and meaningful relationship. Capitol visits are great too when legislators and their staff are at the Capitol building.
- ▶ **Town Hall Meetings:** Host a town hall meeting or attend a town hall meeting held by your elected officials. Let your legislator know you are a local constituent and service provider, advocate for survivors, and/or survivor (or any title you prefer to share).
- ▶ **Program Tours or Events:** If you work at a family violence program or another survivor-serving agency, hosting an informal site visit allows elected officials to observe and learn about how you provide services and support for survivors. Legislators can also meet program staff and survivors (as appropriate, accounting for confidentiality). You could also invite your legislator to any of your program's events over the next year.

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Preparing to Communicate with Your Legislator

- **Research Your Legislator(s).** Visit the House and Senate website Member pages referenced above for more information about your legislator's background, issues of importance to them, and committee membership. Knowing their priorities and identifying issues that align or overlap with your advocacy offers a great talking point and way to connect. Seek out information on how they view domestic violence and any action they've taken to support survivors, including their voting record on relevant issues. You can also brush up on any issues, laws and funding sources you plan to discuss.



While it helps to be informed, you certainly do not need to know everything about all the issues in order to advocate! You can always follow up with a legislator's office after a meeting to provide information they requested.

- **Consider Who is Involved.** If you are reaching out to schedule a meeting, consider who could attend the meeting and what they uniquely bring to the conversation. This involves knowing the purpose of your meeting and what may be most impactful. For example, a survivor who wants to share their story could help a legislator understand the issue in a more personal way. Someone with data analysis expertise could drive home the importance and nuance of statistics you share. A housing advocate in the legislator's district can speak to the unique challenges of assisting survivors in finding affordable, safe housing. Consider the different types of expertise you want to share and think strategically about who can communicate that most effectively.
- **Know Your Talking Points & Agenda.**
 - General Talking Points: You may want to prepare some brief general talking points on domestic violence to share. See [Appendix A: Talking Points: Sharing Information About Domestic Violence](#) for potential talking points.
 - Targeted Talking Points: If you have a targeted request, you can prepare that ahead of time.
 - During legislative session, TCFV has a legislative agenda with the bills and funding requests we are prioritizing. Please see [Appendix C: TCFV's 89th Legislative Session Policy Agenda](#) if you want to help advocate for these agenda items. Also the policy team may send out action alerts and other requests asking for your advocacy. We always include talking points or other templates and resources to prepare you to take action!
 - If you are with a family violence center or another organization serving survivors, you can offer materials on your mission, services, and an overview of any recent meaningful data highlighting the services you offer and the needs of survivors. A recent impact report or annual report could be helpful as well. Please reach out to TCFV policy team at policy@tcfv.org if you want assistance with making a targeted request to your legislator!

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Participating in a Meeting with Your Legislator

- **Meeting Structure.** Meetings with legislators or their staff can vary depending on who is present, how much time you have and the meeting purpose, but a general structure could include:
 - Open the meeting by thanking the person with whom you are meeting and the legislator's work.
 - Introduce the group if this is the initial meeting. Each participant should briefly introduce themselves. If attendees are constituents of the legislator, that should be mentioned, as well as anyone who represents an agency and/or people served in the legislator's district.
 - Highlight that you, your organization and/or the survivors and families you serve are constituents of the legislator. Insert your 'engagement ask' here. See suggestions on the previous page for general and targeted talking points. Be polite, gracious, and appreciative of the time the legislator or staff give. When possible, personalize the issue by talking about what needs went unmet for you as a survivor or for your community and the people you serve.
 - Even if you aren't getting the response or support you had envisioned staying positive and keeping the door open for ongoing conversation is important. See [Appendix B: Compassionate Corrections](#) for additional guidance.
 - As you are closing the meeting, thank the person you met with again and if applicable, thank them specifically for support they have given to survivors of family violence. Ask if they have any questions for you and/or your organization. If you have been asked a question to which you do not know the answer, let them know you will follow-up with an answer. Share that you can act as a resource for their office on this issue and are happy to provide additional information.
 - If you feel comfortable doing so, you can ask the legislator or staff to take a photo with you, so you can share your appreciation on social media. Please note that if it is close to an election for this member you may want to refrain from public posting so as not to be seen as influencing or endorsing their candidacy, something 501c3 organizations cannot do.
- **Meeting Follow Up.** It is a good practice to send an email follow up thanking the member and/or staff for their time and summarizing the points you discussed in the meeting. See [Appendix E for a Meeting Follow-Up Email Template](#). Be sure to follow through with additional information that the office requested or you said you would offer. Regular communication with the member's office is key to future collaborative work with the office.

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Submit (aka Drop) a Card in Support of or Against a Bill

- **What is Submitting Or “Dropping” a Card?** This is an in-person action you can take at the Capitol building to officially register your position (opposition or support) on a bill. When you drop a card, your support or opposition will appear in the bill record, which can be reviewed by the Legislature and the general public.
- **When & How Do You Drop a Card?** Dropping a card must be done on Texas Capitol grounds through the touch-screen kiosks onsite or through a laptop/tablet that is connected to the free public Capitol WiFi. A card can only be dropped on the day of the legislative hearing. The bill will generally be available for registering a position 30 minutes to an hour before the committee hearing is scheduled to start, and registration usually closes when public testimony is completed (might vary depending on the length of the hearing). For Senate committee hearings, sometimes you may need drop an actual paper card in the committee hearing room. The information on that paper card will be similar to what you enter in the digital format, including your name, address, phone number, if you represent an organization, and of course the bill number and your position on the bill. If you complete a paper card, you can give it to the clerk in the committee room to submit it. Please [click here](#) for a step by step process on how to submit a card.

Survivor Safety Tip

We know home address safety is important and while the addresses you put on cards is generally not made public, consider using a P.O. Box or collaborating with your local family violence center on using their administrative office address.

Sign up for TCFV’s Capitol Crew Email Listserv

As we mentioned in the beginning of this guide, our legislative advocacy is most effective when we have your support! During legislative session we will email our Capitol Crew listserv with action alerts and specific requests for support, including step by step guides and templates in reaching out to your legislators. Sign up for the listserv using this [online form](#) or email us at policy@tcfv.org with any questions.

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Testify in Support of or Against a Bill

There are a few ways you can offer your testimony in support of or against a bill, including:

- **Written testimony:** Usually one to two pages of your reasons why you support or oppose a bill, printed and delivered in person to the committee members on the day the bill is scheduled for a committee hearing. In many House committees, printed written testimony can only accompany oral testimony because there is now an online process for submitting most written comments. See our electronic comment section below for more.
- **Oral testimony:** Spoken in person in front of the committee members, on the day the bill is scheduled for a committee hearing. Hearings can be many hours long and bills are not scheduled to be heard at specific times, so wait times can be lengthy. However, this is an effective way to communicate your position on a bill and share why it matters to you. Testimony is usually limited to two or three minutes although committee members may ask you questions after you provide your testimony. You can think about possible questions they might ask and your potential responses, but it is always ok to say you'll follow up if you don't know the answer to a question they ask.
- **Electronic Comments:** Now available in the House, Texans can submit public comment electronically online before the hearing in which the bill is being heard ends. This link goes to the electronic portal and is also often on the hearing notice. The link to submit comments is posted at the bottom of the public notice announcing the committee hearing and the bills to be heard. Keep in mind this is not typically available for Senate hearings so be aware in those instances you may need to create written testimony.
- Please reach out to the TCFV policy team at policy@tcfv.org with questions or if you are interested in testifying on bills on our legislative agenda, or beyond!

Survivor Safety Tip

Hearings are publicly available, including your image. Being able to raise your voice on an issue is key but keep in mind your image would be broadcast with the hearing as well as your testimony, in case that poses safety considerations.

Engaging in Legislative Advocacy: What Does it Look Like?

Participate in TCFV & TAASA's Capitol Day Event

Held every February in legislative session years, TCFV and our partner coalition the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) hold a Capitol Day event to stand in solidarity with survivors of domestic and



sexual violence. We offer information on TCFV & TAASA's legislative priorities and opportunities to discuss and learn about our bills, and then we get inspired with a rally and speeches from survivors, legislators and leaders. We round out the day with legislative visits you've scheduled with your legislators, asking for their support on TCFV & TAASA's funding priorities and bills, as well as other measures you want to support or bring to their attention. Reach out to us at policy@tcfv.org, policy@taasa.org or [visit TCFV's Public Policy website](#) for more info!

Check Out TCFV's Online Resources

- [TCFV's Public Policy Website](#) has a variety of resources, including legislative updates from past sessions, our current legislative agenda, and ways to take action.
- [TCFV's Voting Guide](#) can help support you or others as you prepare to vote. The guide offers voting information, important dates, and tips on safe voting for survivors as well as how family violence centers can support survivors and advocates in the voting process.
- Stay in touch! Reach out to the TCFV policy team at policy@tcfv.org with questions or ideas about how you can make an impact.

Donate to Support TCFV's Policy Work

TCFV receives grants that fund most of our work, however those grants cannot be used for legislative advocacy at the Capitol. TCFV has a strong policy team, one of the largest among state domestic violence coalitions. Everything is bigger in Texas! But to continue our vital state and federal legislative advocacy, we can't do it alone—we need help from people like you! Consider donating to support our policy efforts that center on survivors' safety, choices, and healing, and the family violence services that support them. Click the Donate button below to contribute today!



Support the policy team at TCFV with a donation that directly supports legislative advocacy with and for survivors!

A Note on Wellness in Legislative Advocacy

Legislative advocacy can feel invigorating when we make progress--and it can also feel exhausting and frustrating, or even scary, when we see action that we feel is not informed by survivors experiences or that we worry could cause more harm. Engaging in effective legislative advocacy efforts take time, patience and sustained strategic effort, which can wear down our wellbeing. We know that legislative advocacy is not only connected to our efforts to stand with survivors, it is also deeply connected to the lives we live--our identities, cultures, work, families, friends, and communities. The advocacy we engage in at the Capitol impacts us all in different ways. For communities that are marginalized and oppressed, the impact of the legislature's actions hold unique and significant weight. Legislative action can create increased safety, options, and resources, or it can serve to remove them or create increased concerns for safety. There are as many ways to tend to wellness as there are humans, but below are some ideas about how we can tend to ourselves in the context of legislative advocacy.

Seek to understand your boundaries and set them as needed. Each of us is triggered or activated by different experiences, just as we find joy, fun and relaxation in different ways. Knowing what threatens--and supports--our individual emotional safety is key to engaging in advocacy work. Taking note and being aware of what dysregulates and regulates us can help us see more clearly where we can concentrate our advocacy efforts and where we may need to set a boundary to protect ourselves. Advocacy is a collaborative effort and talking with our colleagues or fellow advocates about when we can engage in the work and when we need to step back can help us continue the work while caring for ourselves.

Lean into support. We cannot engage in effective legislative advocacy alone. We shouldn't have to bear the burden of it alone either. Whether it's meeting with a supportive friend one on one, finding community with other advocates, creating a wellness space among colleagues, scheduling a therapy session, or any other supports that might work for you, lean into the relationships and communities that help you feel heard, supported and validated. Reach out to us at policy@tcfv.org if you need assistance making a connection!

Take space, make space. As mentioned above, some legislative actions or bills disproportionately affect marginalized and oppressed communities. In these moments, advocates should defer to the people most affected and listen to determine next steps. Conversations amongst advocates with differing levels of privilege can help inform when taking space and making space are needed.

Rest. Engaging in legislative advocacy requires energy and effort and therefore also requires rest and time away from our work. We need and are deserving of rest. Although legislative session is fast moving and unpredictable, taking care of ourselves and finding time when we can do things that fuel us not only sustains us in the long term, but is an act that asserts our humanity and worthiness outside of what we produce or achieve.

We thank you for doing this work and hope you will find wellness practices that work best for you.

Appendix A

Talking Points: Sharing Information About Domestic Violence

When meeting with a legislator, you will always want to highlight specific information, statistics and stories that align with the purpose of your meeting, but general talking points about domestic violence can be useful too. Please consider the context, your purpose, and the legislator's background and priority issues when discussing any of the general talking points below, as you will likely need to emphasize certain points over others or make adjustments. TCFV is happy to assist in developing talking points if you need tailored assistance! Contact us at policy@tcfv.org

- Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking have urgent, ongoing housing, legal, economic, health, safety, and other needs. Survivors face these needs during an abusive relationship, in the immediate aftermath of an abusive relationship and sometimes for many years after an abusive relationship ends.
- Black survivors, survivors of color, survivors in the LGBTQ+ community, survivors with disabilities, and immigrant survivors face additional threats and barriers to accessing resources and experience disproportionately high rates of family violence.
- The need for shelter and other essential family violence center services such as legal advocacy, housing advocacy, children's services, and counseling, often outpaces the resources and capacity of family violence centers to meet those needs. As one of the fastest-growing states in the nation, with an estimated 8 million+ survivors potentially in need of services, it is a stark reality that family violence is a rapidly growing public health crisis in Texas.[1]
- A 2024 study shows that nearly 60 percent of survivors who are denied shelter will either live outside or in a car or return to the abusive partner.[2] Family violence centers need increased funding to meet that growing need, so that survivors who take the courageous step to ask for help will not be turned away from shelter because it's full.
- Rates of domestic violence often increase after a natural disaster, and this has been true for Texas survivors particularly after Winter Storm Uri and the COVID-19 pandemic.[3][4] Calls to domestic violence hotlines, calls to law enforcement for family violence incidents, and requests for shelter all rose significantly in our state.[5][6]
- Since 2020, more than 200 Texans have died every year due to domestic violence homicide. In the past ten years (2013-2023), nearly 1900 Texans lost their lives to domestic violence homicides.[7]

[1] Smith SG, Khatiwada S, Richardson L, Basile KC, Friar NW, Chen J, Zhang Kudon H, & Leemis RW. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 State Report. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2023.

[2] Wood, L. Baumler. E., Voth Schrag, R., McGiffert, M., Temple, J. & Voyles, M. (Submitted). Intimate partner violence experiences and risks for homicide among shelter residents. Submitted to Victims and Offenders.

[3] Megan L. Evans, M.D., M.P.H., Margo Lindauer, J.D., and Maureen E. Farrell, M.D. A Pandemic within a Pandemic — Intimate Partner Violence during Covid-19. (2021) New England Journal of Medicine. Available at: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2024046>

[4] Schumacher, J. A., Coffey, S. F., Norris, F. H., Tracy, M., Clements, K., & Galea, S. (2010). Intimate partner violence and Hurricane Katrina: Predictors and associated mental health outcomes. *Violence and Victims*, 25(5), 588-603. doi: 10.1891/0886-6708.25.5.588

[5] 2022 Crime in Texas (2023) Texas Department of Public Safety. Retrieved at <https://www.dps.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/crimereports/22/2022cit.pdf>

[6] Texas Health and Human Services Commission Family Violence Program, FY 2023. Family Violence Program Statistics. Available upon request.

[7] Honoring Texas Victims, Texas Council on Family Violence. Reports from 2013-2023.

Appendix B

Offering Compassionate Corrections

Engaging in legislative advocacy puts you in the position to offer accurate, evidence-based information about domestic violence--and at times you may choose to share your personal and/or professional experiences. You may also find yourself in the position to respond to someone making inaccurate or even victim-blaming statements about survivors. These situations should be handled with care and compassion. Many people have not received education about domestic violence and this is an opportunity to kindly and respectfully share information that reflects what survivors' lived experiences, advocates' experiences, and/or research tell us about the reality of domestic violence. When you hear someone stating a myth or misconception about domestic violence, you can offer accurate information by starting with:

- “In my experience as a [survivor/advocate/etc.] what I’ve seen and what the data shows is...” or
- “I think we both agree that [name a point of commonality] although what I have seen in my own experience [or professional work, or in the research] is...”

A loving correction, as adrienne maree brown discusses in her book by the same name,[1] creates a pathway for understanding and learning when we offer someone a new way of thinking about or experiencing the world. It may not always change someone’s perspective, but the compassionate sharing of what we know to be true, including our authentic experiences, can help introduce someone to a more expansive view of what is and what could be.

“Even if you can't see the changes that you want to see immediately, you just keep on doing the work and eventually they will radically change in a way that's totally unanticipated but at the same time is what you're working for.

-Loretta Ross

[1] brown, adrienne maree. (2024). Loving Corrections. AK Press.

Appendix C

TCFV 89th Legislative Session Agenda



ADDRESSING LETHALITY FACTORS FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS

With increases in intimate partner homicide and incidents of family violence, intimate partner homicide is an issue that requires a collaborative team working towards solutions. With research consistently indicating that there are three top known lethality indicators; strangulation, stalking, and the intersection of firearms and intimate partner violence, this measure would create a 2-year lethality factor taskforce with explicit charges to make policy recommendations for the 90th legislative session.



ABILITY TO CONFER ON A PLEA NOTICE FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Victims of sexual assault, stalking, indecent assault, and trafficking have the right to confer with the prosecutor on disposition decisions including plea agreements, rather than solely getting notice. This measure proposes to add victims of felony family violence to the list of people who can confer with prosecutors on the plea agreement, within Article 56A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. This measure would allow family violence survivors greater safety and voice in the criminal justice process while also addressing a gap in the list of rights afforded to family violence victims.



DATING VIOLENCE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION & SURVIVOR SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

Current code requiring dating violence policies (Section 37.0831, Education Code) has referenced implementation in district plans for nearly 20 years but the circular code reference was never made. This measure focuses on implementing these policies by adding clean up language to Section 11.252 of the Education Code to ensure that these policies are addressed in district improvement plans. Language would also be added to address survivor safety in reporting dating violence to parents. Survivors' parents would receive notification first to ensure time for safety planning and to require the survivor be offered safety resources and support. **(HB 1332, Representative Garcia)** A second measure would allow for collection of data on dating violence in schools and would create a pathway for young people using violence to be referred to Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) with the option for healthy relationship and dating violence education to be offered.



PROTECTING SURVIVORS FROM COLLECTION OF COERCED DEBT

This measure seeks to protect individuals from debt collection actions when they are victims of identity theft by adding a new section to the Texas Finance Code, establishing that creditors and debt collectors cannot collect on debts incurred as a result of identity theft under certain conditions. Creditors and debt collectors could pursue legal action against the perpetrator of the identity theft to recover the debt.

Appendix D

Meeting Request Template

Dear [scheduler's name],

My name is [name], and I am a constituent of Representative/Senator [name]; I am reaching out to request a meeting with the member on [insert suggested date(s)] on behalf of the [insert organization].

My colleagues and I are interested in setting up a [virtual/in person] meeting with Representative/Senator [name] about the importance of supportive services for survivors of family violence, and family violence prevention in our community [or add your purpose in reaching out here]. In our community, we are seeing [insert community/ program specific information and note if you and/or your program are constituents].

[I/We] are eager to meet with Representative/Senator [name] and share more about [your purpose]. We are also eager to hear about your priorities and how we might be a resource for you.

[I/We] can be reached at [number] or [email] to schedule a meeting; [I/We] look forward to hearing from you.

Best, [Insert Name]

Appendix E

Meeting Follow Up Template

Dear Representative/Senator [name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and my colleagues/staff of the [program] on [date] to discuss [summary of the meeting discussion or topics].

As we discussed during our meeting, [summarize any commitment made by the member; answer any question asked during the meeting that you did not have an answer for at the time; and/or reference/link/attach any materials you offered to send as follow-up].

Lastly, we would like to invite you to visit our program when you are next back home [if you are part of an organization]. We would be happy to help schedule and facilitate a tour so that you and your staff can see first-hand the importance of the services you make possible. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your office to ensure we are meeting the needs of the residents of [district number or community/town/city name].

Best, [Insert Name]

Appendix F

Resources & Support

Below is a list of quick links for legislative resources and support for survivors.

Legislative Resources:

- [Who represents me? \(TX\)](#)
- [The Legislative Process in Texas](#)
- [Texas Legislature Online](#)
- [Texas House of Representatives](#)
- [Texas Senate](#)
- [Capitol Maps & Parking](#)
- [Legislative Budget Board](#)
- [TCFV Public Policy Webpage](#)

Survivor Support:

- [National Domestic Violence Hotline \(NDVH\)](#)
- [Serving Texas Families: 2024 Statewide Directory of Family Violence Service Programs](#)
- [TCFV's Find Help Webpage](#)

Additional Legislative Advocacy Toolkits:

Some content in this toolkit was adapted from other toolkits focused on legislative advocacy:

- [National Domestic Violence Hotline \(NDVH\) Advocacy Toolkit for Survivors and Prevention Services](#)
- [Texas Network of Youth Services \(TNOYS\) Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance Virtual Advocate's Toolkit](#)

**Thank You for Your
Advocacy for Survivors
of Domestic Violence!**

Questions? Contact us.

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