

The Essential GUIDE

An Introduction To Advocating
For Survivors Of Family Violence



In The Movement

Essential practices for advocates in training

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Introduction: History of the Battered Women's Movement

By Debby Tucker

The battered women's movement internationally is an outgrowth of prior movements that countered alcoholism, sexism, child abuse, racism, classism and homophobia. Today, our advocacy for respect and freedom from fear for all is directly tied to the histories and continued development of these movements. We learned from those who came before us. We continue as a movement and as individuals to create a world where violence is no longer used by individuals, groups, or nations.

First Sanctuary in Texas

The first venture we know of to open a sanctuary in Texas was in Belton in 1875. The shelter was established by Martha McWhirter as a refuge for battered women or those whose husbands spent crop money on Saturday-night binges. Women lived a communal life in the shelter which continued into the 1890's; and together the residents became so prosperous they donated money to Belton for civic causes. The Belton shelter still stands riddled with bullet holes from a time an irate husband assembled a vigilante group and tried to shoot shelter residents out of their refuge. It didn't work. *The women shot back.*

The contemporary battered women's movement in the United States was built on the efforts of those in Europe who had begun to recognize systematic use of violence against women and children and organized to respond. The first modern shelter for battered women was founded in Chiswick, England in 1970 by [Erin Pizzey](#). Her book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear* published in 1974 gave rise to a renewed recognition of the needs of victims of domestic violence and their children. [Del Martin](#) published *Battered Wives* in 1976 as the culmination of her leadership of a Task Force on Battered Women of the [National Organization for Women](#). Those of us beginning to organize what became the Austin Center for Battered Women invited her to speak in Austin in 1977. By the time Erin Pizzey came to the United States on a book tour to four cities in 1979, one was Houston, groups were developing shelters all across the U.S.

Formation of the Texas Council on Family Violence

The [Texas Council on Family Violence](#) (TCFV) was fortunate to begin its work very early as the movement to end violence against women moved into the United States. I hosted the first meeting for TCFV in April of 1978 as the Executive Director of the Austin Center for Battered Women, which later merged with the Austin Rape Crisis Center and is now [SafePlace](#).



Representatives from nine Texas communities: Austin ([Debby Tucker](#)), Corpus Christi (Catherine Chambers), Dallas (Jane White), Denton, El Paso, Fort Worth (Lynn Bendslev), Houston ([Toby Myers](#)), San Antonio ([Ruthe Lewin Winegarten](#)) and Waco (Myrtle Taylor) resolved to form an organization that would

provide a unified statewide presence. Given how little we knew about other state and national efforts, we chose the name Texas *Commission* on Family Violence and set out to incorporate at the Secretary of State's Office. Our application to incorporate was denied with the Secretary informing us that it was not possible to be called a *Commission* unless the entity was appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate! And that is how we became the *Council*...not knowing that in most other states the name *Coalition* would be chosen for the statewide efforts.

We sought to create opportunities for cooperation, coordination and collaboration with one another and with a myriad of professionals and other organizations coming into contact with victims, offenders and their children as well as to improve laws and policies to hold offenders accountable and increase the safety of victims. Our original motto was ***Share What You Have, Ask for What You Need.***

Prior to this formation meeting, several of those involved with the nine groups present initiated the provision of some emergency family violence services and began to analyze the challenges for battered women and their children— many while responding to sexual violence. The Austin Rape Crisis Center, the first rape crisis center in Texas, opened in 1974, and we immediately began to receive calls from sexual assault victims but also from those caught in an abusive relationship. Victims would say things like, “*Can you help me? I wasn’t raped by a stranger...I was beaten and raped by my husband.*” For me and some others, this was our first awareness of individuals committing acts of violence against their wives or girlfriends and children. There were also those among the early organizers of the TCFV who knew all too well from their own family experiences that this was a reality. As other communities in Texas organized to respond to sexual violence, they too began to recognize the existence and need for services for victims of domestic violence.

At the formation meeting we adopted a flat, non-hierarchical structure for working together and appointed individuals to the Board of Directors to serve in roles mirroring those often found in nonprofit boards. We also created roles particular to the work we saw TCFV as performing on behalf of its members, the local shelters and other direct service providers as well as individuals who supported ending violence. As a result, our first “Chair” or “President” of the Board was called the *Coordinator of Internal Communication*. [Toby Myers](#) with the [Houston Area Women’s Center](#) was selected to hold this key position. Toby says it was because she was working at a state agency, [Texas Research Institute of the Mental Sciences](#), and had access to toll-free calling. But it was much more than that.



As a formerly battered woman who was providing help to others, she embodied the combination of personal experience, formal education (doctorate) and professional services (counseling) that we knew would help articulate the mission and build the organization. When she stepped down as Coordinator of Internal Communications, after two years, she remained on the board. She was then elected to the position of Representative of Texas to the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) (NCADV) and later was designated as a life-time member when the bylaws were changed to a more typical structure. Toby consistently brought passion, persistence and perspective to the Board.

The Beginning of Policy Advocacy for the Texas Council on Family Violence

In that initial Board structure we also had a Coordinator of Legislative Liaison, Gwen Gordon of Waco, since we knew we'd be approaching the Texas Legislature to ask for changes in laws as well as to create financial support from the State for prevention and intervention. And there were *seven* other critical roles and responsibilities identified to ensure the growth and contributions of TCFV.

In 1979, TCFV began work with [Senator Chet Brooks](#) of Houston/Galveston to establish a pilot funding program through the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS). This program allowed for an appropriation of \$200,000, which permitted the initial nine agencies to receive funding. In 1981, the following legislative session, Senator Brooks co-sponsored a bill with [Representative Mary Polk of El Paso](#) to establish the [Family Violence Program](#) in the TDHS, now part of the [Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#) (HHSC). This bill aligned closely with the recommendations made by TCFV. It provided on-going funding for family violence services while establishing precedent with the state coalition and the state agency of cooperative work. With leadership from Senator Brooks, Representative Polk and many others, The Texas Legislature increased the funding to \$1,000,000; and made it possible to support more than 30 programs. All subsequent legislative sessions have continued to increase funding and the number of programs receiving state support.

TCFV was also visible in the Capitol in legislation establishing protective orders, even though we were initially unsuccessful at including a criminal sanction for their violation. In 1981 we pushed for criminal sanctions. After that session, violating a protective order carried the consequence of a Class A misdemeanor. From that point forward, TCFV advocated policy improvements and found important allies to propose needed changes. Some of the leaders in the Texas movement have also become members of the Texas Legislature: [Juan Hinojosa](#), now a Texas Senator from McAllen, helped to start [Mujeres Unidas/Women Together](#), sponsored significant legislation for TCFV, advocated for funding for programs and later served on the Board of TCFV.

The Beginning of Technical Assistance and Training for TCFV

Simultaneously, TCFV emphasized its technical assistance and training to support advancement of the direct services to victims as well as the prevention of family violence. A staffed office was possible beginning January 1, 1982 with the assistance of a three-year declining challenge grant from the [Levi Strauss Foundation](#). It was matched with donations from the [Haas Foundation](#), [The Trull Foundation](#), and dues from programs and members who believed in our mission. [Eve McArthur](#) and I, [Debby Tucker](#), both from the Austin Center became the initial staff of TCFV.

We began responding to calls for technical assistance and day-to-day problem-solving. We toured every shelter and family violence program in the State over that first year, learning things that would help us organize an annual conference for our members. We wrote manuals, my favorite, *A Stitch in Time Saves Nine: Administering a Family Violence Shelter*. When we wrote the legislation to fund local programs, we also set aside 6% of whatever the Legislature appropriated for TDHS, and later HHSC, to administer the program. Another 6% was set aside to be used to provide technical assistance and training. TDHS contracted with TCFV to provide significant technical assistance and support to the local programs. With this approach, of establishing special purpose set-asides, as funding grew for services then both the state government and the state coalition would also grow to further support the advancement of the work.

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, the Beginning of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and the passage of the Violence Against Women Act

From our experience in Texas, we knew how effective it was to work towards establishing designated funding for the state domestic violence coalition *within* the statute supporting funding for direct services. This led to our advocacy to include a similar set-aside for funding of state-level work at the federal level.



When the [Family Violence Prevention and Services Act](#) (FVPSA) was first passed in 1984 we included a set-aside of 2.5% of whatever Congress appropriated to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families](#) to support the entire program to specifically fund [state domestic violence coalitions](#) *divided equally* among all states and territories. There were *five* of us involved in this effort and we got it done in *one week*! At the time of creating the set-aside for state coalition funding in FVPSA only half of the STDVCs had established an office to perform state-level work and coordination. By the time we came together to form the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) (NNEDV), almost every state had an office for their state coalition. As founding Chair of the National Network, it was a priority to assist that handful of remaining states to establish coalition offices as well as to begin outreach to the territorial and Native Coalitions.

In 1989 TCFV advocated for the establishment of the [Battering Intervention and Prevention Project \(BIPP\)](#) and secured the initial allocation of \$400,000 to provide funding for 14 programs working with men committing violence against family and household members. This was one of the first, *if not the very first*, state funding of civilian programs for intervention with offenders. There were some remarkable people involved in this effort including Toby Myers who were directing the battering intervention program at [Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse](#). In addition, national organizations and stakeholders such as [Men Stopping Violence](#), [Emerge](#) and [Dr. Edward Gondolf](#) advised TCFV in the development of the legislation and the program standards. Dr. Gondolf and a remarkable TCFV Committee worked cooperatively with the [Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#), [Community Justice Assistance Division](#) to devise the policies governing the BIPP program and set guidelines for local programs engaged in battering intervention and prevention. This is also important work for [TCFV](#) and will continue to develop as we learn more about how to intervene more effectively in family violence.



Christina Walsh



Rhonda Gerson

NNEDV led the effort to develop the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), initially passed in [1994](#), with only about a dozen of us writing and working with other national groups, state domestic violence coalitions (SDVC) and state sexual assault coalitions (SSAC) to get it passed. We got to work closely with [Vice President, then Senator Joe Biden](#) as well as House co-sponsor [Senator, then Representative Charles Schumer](#) and [Representative Patricia Schroeder](#) to write the legislation. One of the all-time best stories related to the passage of VAWA concerns [Representative Jack Brooks](#) of Beaumont, Texas who

chaired the Judiciary Committee in the House and whose leadership in passing VAWA was absolutely essential. *But it can really only be told in person!*

TCFV was also working closely with Senator Edward Kennedy to draft legislation to provide federal funding for a national hotline. The original hotline operated by the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) and funded by [Johnson & Johnson](#) closed when their funding ran out. With leadership from [Rhonda Gerson](#), Chair of the Board of TCFV at that time, TCFV stepped up to reestablish a hotline. One of the more exciting last minute developments in the passage of VAWA was the agreement to amend Senator's Kennedy's Hotline legislation onto VAWA and have it pass as well in 1994! [Christina Walsh](#), Communications Director for TCFV then and now for the [National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence \(NCDSV\)](#) helped write the grant to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Family Violence Prevention and Services](#) to open the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) as a project of TCFV in February, 1996.

When VAWA was reauthorized in [2000](#) and [2005](#), many more advocates became involved and the last meeting I attended of The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence in 2010 there were over 100 groups represented! The most significant advocacy efforts now are being coordinated by the [Campaign for Full Funding to End Sexual and Domestic Violence](#) in which the [NCDSV](#) the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) and many more are involved. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence has begun the drafting of [VAWA in 2011](#) to ensure reauthorization of this critical national program.

Today, after 33 years, TCFV has made significant contributions to the movement to end violence against women in Texas, the United States and around the world. There is a very rich history beyond this quick sketch, but it begins to explain how the organization began and some highlights in its development. As you learn more you'll want to know more. TCFV Board, Staff and Members will welcome your questions and chances to talk with you in greater detail.

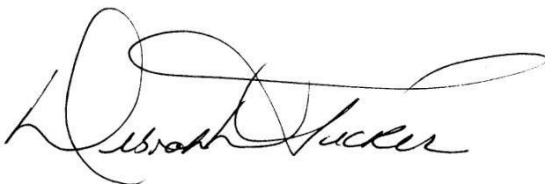


Yokosuka Japan: Shelter Director, Translator and Tucker

The chapters that follow will provide a solid grounding upon which you can build your own way of contributing to the progress of this movement. The movement will continue to advance and improve only if it stays open to new ideas and learning so please ask questions and make suggestions!

Advocating for women and other victims of domestic violence can be very challenging and *isn't for everyone*. As someone who has been fortunate to be involved in most aspects of the movement. I understand that each of us has to find our niche. You'll find what you do in this movement not only supportive and life-changing for those you assist, but also personally life-altering.

I welcome you to this movement and wish you the fulfillment that comes with knowing you are making a difference!



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Debby is the Executive Director of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCDsv), a position she's held since the organization formed in 1998.

In August 1996, Debby joined Sarah M. Buel, JD, in opening Tucker, Buel and Associates, a consulting firm offering customized consultation and training to end violence against women. In May 1998, Sarah and Debby co-founded the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence to sponsor conferences and provide customized training and consultation nationwide. The National Center received funding from the Office on Violence Against Women of the U.S. Department of Justice to collaborate on trainings with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the National Sheriffs' Association and the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement. These trainings educate law enforcement officers on their responses to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Tucker has extensive experience on the national level. She served as Co-Chair of the U.S. Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence from 2000-2003. She served as founding Chair of the National Network to End Domestic Violence during its leadership in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994. She is a member of the Advisory Committee for the State Farm Insurance initiated Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, the Board of Advisors for WomensLaw.org and the National Leadership Committee of Jewish Women International.

Chapter 1: Dynamics of Family Violence

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify common terms and concepts applicable to family violence.
- ✓ Learn about the dynamics of family violence, tactics batterers use to control their partners, and the intended harms to the partners.
- ✓ Identify barriers to leaving an abusive relationship.
- ✓ Identify warning signs of a batterer.
- ✓ Explore the larger context of violence against women.

The Language of Our Work

Family Violence is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior that may include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and verbal abuse. Family violence centers on the concept of one person wanting to have power and control over another with whom they have an intimate or familiar relationship. This pattern of controlling and abusive behavior is also referred to as **Domestic Violence**, **Intimate Partner Violence(IPV)**, or **Battering**.

All abusive tactics are harmful and wrong, but many are not against the law. The term **Criminal Family Violence** describes abusive tactics that are illegal and subject to prosecution.

The legal definition of Criminal Family Violence (as defined by Texas Family Code 71.004): An act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself.

Victims and **Survivors** are the two most common terms applied to the population we serve. In most contexts, it is preferable to use survivor because it emphasizes the strength and resilience of the individual. However, both terms are used frequently in this manual. Some systems, such as law enforcement and other legal or governmental bodies, offer protections and services to *victims* of family violence. Some recognize that the victim terminology is a way to signify and honor the experiences of being victimized by another individual; to indicate that someone has been harmed or injured. As such, the term victim is commonly used within a legal or justice oriented context.

Batterers use a pattern of coercive and abusive tactics to exert power, obtain and maintain control over their partners. Other terms for batterer include **Abusers**, **Offenders** or **Perpetrators**.

The legal definition of Batterers: Individuals who commit repeated acts of abuse, violence, or controlling behavior, or who repeatedly threaten violence against another who is:

1. Related to the batterer by affinity (marriage) or consanguinity (blood),
2. Is a former spouse of the batterer,
3. Resides or has resided in the same household with the batterer, or
4. Is or was in a relationship with the batterer.

See the glossary for other related terms.

Understanding the Dynamics of Family Violence

While there are many different theories as to the causes of family violence, leaders in the family violence field, along with the Texas Council on Family Violence, believe that family violence is rooted in batterers' desire to maintain power and control over their partners and that it is a learned behavior.

As emphasized above, family violence is a *pattern* of coercive, controlling behaviors that may include a wide range of abusive tactics. In addition to physical and sexual abuse, batterers may use many tactics to exert power and control over a partner, including:

Coercion and Threats: Includes threatening to harm another person or self, to leave, to report to authorities, to make their partner drop charges or force participation in illegal activities. An example of coercion and threats may be when an abuser says he will consistently show up or call the survivors play of employment if she does not drop the criminal charges that were brought against him after a recent assault. This threat jeopardizes a survivors feelings of safety, job security, and financial independence.

Intimidation: Includes using looks, gestures and actions to make partner feel afraid. This may also include displaying weapons and abusing pets. An example of intimidation may be when an abuser punches a hole in the wall next to a survivor during an argument. The act may not physically harm the victim, but it intimidates and instill fear for the potential of future physical violence, directed at her next time.

Emotional Abuse: Using insults, disrespectful names, guilt or humiliation to make their partners feel bad about themselves. An example of emotional abuse may be when an abuser makes negative comments about the victims appearance, calling her "fat" or "disgusting" in front of friends or family. This behavior is humiliating to a victim and dehumanizes her.

Isolation: Includes controlling their partner's actions and interaction with friends and family or outside influences. Examples include: giving a curfew, restricting access to transportation, barricading inside the home and not allowing employment. An example of isolation may be when an abuser makes the victim feel guilty about spending time with her family. Stating that her closeness with her family makes him feel bad about his relationship with his own family. This manipulative tactic causes her to cease connection with family to appease his feelings and insecurities. Her lost connections and relationships then make her more dependent on him.

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming: Includes making light of the abuse, saying the abuse did not happen and shifting blame to the partner. An example of minimizing behavior may be when an abuser physically harms his partner, then exclaims that he didn't hit her "that hard" and that "she just bruises easily".

Children: Using children to relay messages, threatening to take children away or threatening to report partner to Child Protective Services (CPS). An example of using children may be when the abuser complains about how the child support is being used or enquires what she is using it for. This is a tactic that makes her feel guilty about finances, and give the abuser control over her behaviors and actions.

Male Privilege: Includes not allowing input into decision making, treating partner as a servant and using traditional gender roles to gain power and control in the relationship. An example of male privilege may be when the abuser dictates that the partner shall cook, clean, care for the children, and remain silent during all important family decision making responsibilities. This leaves his partner voiceless and without any power or control within the house.

Economic Abuse: Preventing partner from getting or keeping a job, making partner ask for money and hiding financial information or access to the family income. An example of economic abuse may be when the abuser pressures the victim to give him access to her bank accounts or credit cards, then proceeds to use that information to damage her credit or withdraw all of her funds if she attempts to leave or define barriers.

Power and Control Wheel

A Power and Control Wheel, created by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), can be very helpful in individual advocacy work as it offers survivors an opportunity to recognize and name a wide range of abusive tactics that may have never been identified as abuse.



Power and Control Wheel

The Intended Consequences of Family Violence

You are probably aware of many of the negative impacts of family violence, but keep in mind that these harms are the *intended* results of a batterer's abusive tactics.

As a means of gaining and keeping control over a partner, a batterer may:

- Prevent the partner from sleeping.
 - Withhold food.
 - Withhold needed medications and cut off access to medical care or disability services.
 - Force use of alcohol or drugs.
 - Force a partner to watch mistreatment or abuse of children.
 - Prevent the partner from caring for, comforting, or meeting the basic needs of children.
 - Force a partner to engage in criminal activity.
 - Force a partner to engage in degrading or exploitive sexual acts.
- Exploit a partner's immigration status.

Leaving an Abusive Relationship

There are many reasons why someone might stay in an abusive relationship:

- Emotional connection, love and/or hope the violence will stop and the relationship will get better.
- Concerns for children, family and/or cultural expectations or shame.
- Financial dependence and/or lack of support or resources
- Safety concerns

Please note:

Leaving an abusive relationship increases the risk of being killed by an abusive partner both during the process of leaving and after having left the relationship.

If we understand that family violence is about maintaining power and control, we can understand this increased risk: a partner who is getting ready to leave or who has left threatens batterers' control and some batterers may be willing to do anything, including kill, to regain it.

It's important to keep in mind our role in providing safety and working with survivors to strategize about safety concerns.

Safety planning must be an ongoing element of all advocacy services.

Batterers will use abusive tactics to destabilize, destroy self-esteem, increase dependence, gain leverage, and reinforce threats (CPS, deportation, jail, and hospitalization) to their partners.

Batterers can use these tactics to further marginalize a partner and increase the likelihood that their partner will face victim-blaming or other barriers when trying to leave or get help. Batterers may often try to justify abusive actions by claiming that their partner was drunk, crazy, or a bad mother, among other justifications.

Fortunately, there are steps we can take as advocates to counteract these harms. We can strive to make our programs and services open and accessible to all. When survivors express guilt or shame for actions they were forced to take, we can remind them that batterers are solely responsible for their abusive actions and no one deserves to be abused. We can point out to survivors the strength and resilience that it took to survive the abuse and acknowledge that they did the best they could with the resources available to them at that time. We can try to help survivors focus on the present, highlight their current options, and provide support as they make choices to try and build a safer future. We can become knowledgeable about other support services in the community that may be of benefit to survivors.

Warning Signs of a Batterer

Family violence is never the fault of the victim. No one knowingly enters a relationship with an abusive person.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) has compiled a list of subtle warning signs of a batterer (available at www.nnedv.org). Sharing this information widely can help inform others and raise awareness about family violence.

Warnings Signs of a Batterer:

- Moves too quickly into a relationship.
- Portrays a very charming demeanor or may seem too good to be true.
- Insists partner stop participating in leisure activities or spending time with family and friends.
- Demonstrates extremely jealous or controlling behavior.
- Blames others for everything that goes wrong and never takes responsibility for any actions.
- Criticizes partner's appearance and puts down partner.

The Larger Context of Violence Against Women

Anyone can be a victim of family violence regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status or any other aspect of identity. Family violence crosses all lines.

However, women are much more likely to become victims of family violence and are, in fact, at much greater risk of abuse throughout their lives. The Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence (APIIDV) developed the Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence to illustrate the risks (available at www.apiidv.org/violence/lifetime-spiral.php):



Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence

Accompanying text from APIIDV: In addition to physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuses: violence is about living in a climate of fear, shame, coercive control, and devaluation. It is often experienced in the context of additional oppressions based on race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, type of labor performed, level of education, class position, disability, and immigration or refugee status. Raising awareness about the historical nature of gender violence confronts victim-blaming, informs advocacy, and empowers survivors.

Conclusion

This work is about promoting nonviolence, safety, and empowerment and ending violence, abuse, and oppression while never forgetting to always hold batterers accountable and keep survivors safe. "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." – Audre Lorde

Chapter 2: Basics to Providing Advocacy

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Explore the role of an advocate and review ethics of advocacy.
 - ✓ Review two theoretical models to inform advocacy work: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Social Ecology Model.
 - ✓ Review safety planning basics.
 - ✓ Review topics in confidentiality.
 - ✓ Identify appropriate documentation to promote client safety and agency accountability.
-

What is an advocate?

An advocate is a person who works in support or defense of a person or cause. In this case, you are working to support and the on behalf of a survivor of family violence.

While advocates may come to us in many forms—hotline operators, case managers, shelter directors, specialized legal and immigration advocates, volunteer coordinators and executive directors, among many others at your organization who stretch from the Board of Directors to your volunteers pool—all advocates are working on behalf of survivors in a specific capacity either directly or indirectly.

While the majority of this chapter focuses on advocates providing direct services to victims, please note that all staff members are advocates in the movement to end violence against women.

What does an advocate do?

Respects Confidentiality

- Clearly explains the limits of confidentiality.
- Respects that any personal information shared is the survivors' and respects their right to decide when and how to share information.

Believes and Validates Experiences

- Listens without judgment.
- Uses *Active Listening* skills.

Acknowledges Injustice

- Assures survivors the abuse is not their fault.
- Assures survivors no one deserves to be abused.

Respects Autonomy

- Recognizes survivors are the experts in their own lives.
- Respects survivors' right to make decisions and their own choices.
- Clearly explains the scope of services offered, limits to services and any time constraints.
- Models healthy and ethical communication.
- Sets appropriate boundaries and respects survivors' boundaries.

Helps Plan for Future Safety

- Helps survivors use their own experiences and insight to develop plans for safety and for the future.
- Helps identify additional ways to be safer.
- Communicates any safety concerns in a clear, respectful manner.
- Uses “I” statements: “I’m concerned for your safety.” or “I’m afraid that the violence might get worse.”

Promotes Access to Community Services

- Offers options.
- Helps find ways to meet survivors’ basic needs.
- Provides information about resources.

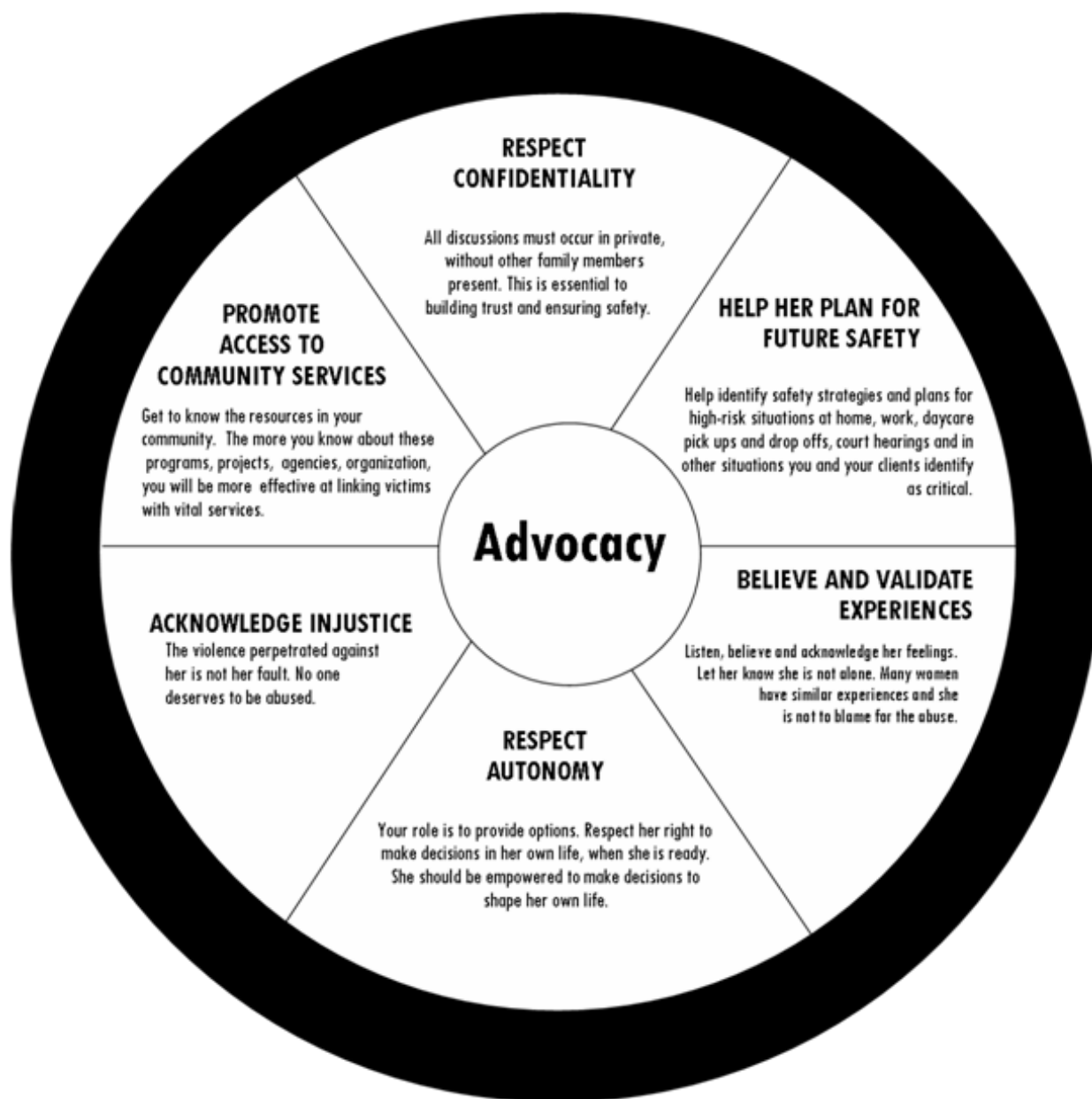
What is HHSC?

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) administers the Family Violence Program, the largest funder of family violence shelter and nonresidential programs across the state, though not all family violence programs are HHSC funded. The HHSC Family Violence Program offers specific, detailed guidelines (both mandates and suggested best practices) to funded programs that inform every aspect of program administration and service delivery.

All HHSC-funded programs are required to collect data on victims served and services provided and to report this data through the Integrated Tracking System (ITS). All data reported to HHSC through ITS is de-identified and does not contain personal identifying information about clients.

The HHSC Family Violence Program offers manuals for both shelter and nonresidential service providers. Reviewing these manuals can offer information and perspective on how your program has been shaped by HHSC Family Violence Program. [Click here to access these manuals.](#)

Much of your role as an advocate is determined by your job description and duties as well as agency and program policy. There are likely limits to the scope of support services that you are able to offer. Those limits are in place to help find a balance between providing the most help to each individual and being able to help the greatest number of people. Talk with your supervisor about what services you are able to provide.



Advocating for Survivors Wheel

Developed by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

What is Active Listening?

Active Listening is the conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying, but also trying to understand the complete message and context of the message being sent.

There are five areas of focus when actively listening. As you work on the hotline as an advocate, using active listening skills will make you more effective at working with survivors.

PAY ATTENTION

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

You should practice:

- Looking directly at the speaker.
- Putting aside distracting thoughts.
- Being in the moment; don't be preoccupied with mentally preparing a response.
- Avoiding distraction; close your door and let your voice mail catch other calls.
- "Listening" to the speaker's body language.
- Refraining from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

SHOW YOU ARE LISTENING

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

You should practice:

- Nodding occasionally.
- Smiling and using other facial expressions.
- Noting your posture and making sure it is open and inviting.
- Encouraging the speaker to continue by using small verbal comments like yes and uh huh.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear.

As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

You should practice:

- Reflecting on what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is." and "Sounds like you are saying." are great ways to reflect back.
- Asking questions to clarify certain points.
- Summarizing the speaker's comments periodically.

DEFER JUDGMENT

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

You should practice:

- Allowing the speaker to finish their sentences.
- Waiting to respond and not interrupt with counter arguments.

RESPOND APPROPRIATELY

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective.

You add nothing by attacking speakers or otherwise putting them down.

You should practice:

- Being candid, open and honest in your response.
- Asserting your opinions respectfully.

Adapted from [Mindtools.com](https://www.mindtools.com)

Framework for Advocacy

Advocating for survivors—individuals who are in a time of crisis— is difficult. As you work with survivors to improve their lives, ask yourself how you would you tackle the survivor’s situation. Put yourself in the person’s shoes. And consider that you are asking someone to jump hurdles in a time of crises, which is considerably more difficult than for someone who is not facing those same obstacles.

Break large challenges into small ones and don’t ask a survivor to tackle something larger than life. They already are.

Empowerment-Based Advocacy recognizes individuals are the experts in their own lives and creates an environment where survivors make choices about their lives.

Advocates practicing empowerment-based advocacy recognize competency and offer support, information, and resources. Advocates highlight options and allow space for survivors to explore options and come to a decision about the next step. Empowerment-based advocacy helps survivors to develop skills to be self-sufficient and independent in the future.

Advocacy can be practiced in many different ways, following many models and philosophical foundations. The movement to end violence against women has been traditionally rooted in empowering women to make their own decisions about their lives.

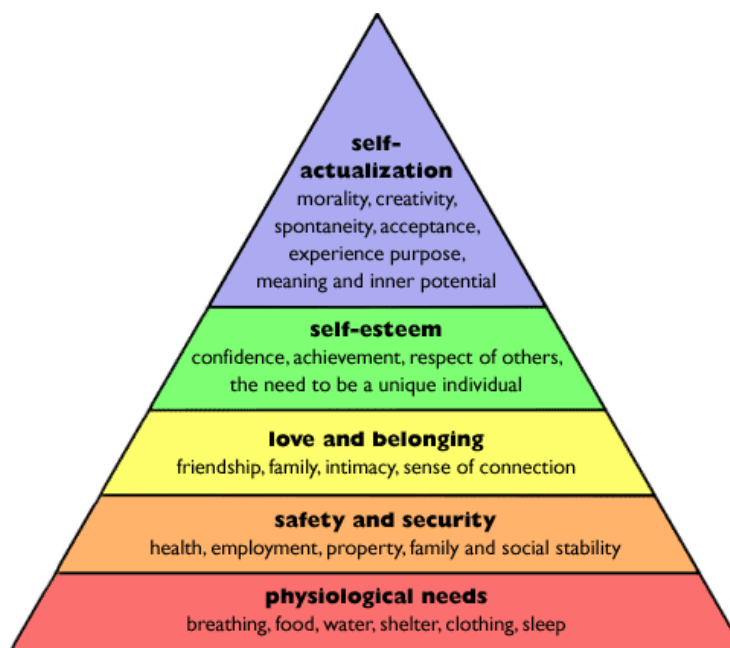
Here are some concrete ideas for incorporating [Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs](#) into day-to-day advocacy work:

Always Check in About the Basics

Check-in with survivors in shelter in order to make sure needs relating to food, clothing, shelter and sleep are being met. Be particularly sensitive to survivors’ basic needs during times of transition. Entering shelter is often frightening. It may be difficult to adjust to communal living, unfamiliar surroundings and different foods. Taking time to make sure that basic needs are met and, to the greatest extent possible, offering a sense of familiarity or consistency lays a strong foundation for survivors to move forward on other goals.

Focus on Safety

Survivors of family violence experience extensive trauma at the hands of



Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

someone who was supposed to love and protect them. That betrayal often shakes the foundations of

trust and undermines any sense of emotional safety. Often, survivors will struggle with feeling unsafe even after their physical safety needs are met. They may be reluctant to trust anyone and might be waiting for any sign that you will hurt them too.

You can help survivors slowly build trust and feel safe by being consistent:

- Be respectful.
- Be on time.
- Follow through on work concerning your clients.

Model Healthy Relationships

Some survivors may have had many healthy and supportive relationships in their lives; others may have experienced nothing but abuse at the hands of friends and family. Each survivor will be different. Treat everyone you meet with healthy communication, good boundaries and respectful conflict resolution.

Help Turn Goals into Successes

Find out what motivates the survivors you work with and help them visualize their hopes and dreams. Help clarify goals and break them down in smaller action steps. Provide positive feedback at every opportunity. Survivors tell advocates that bruises heal quickly but the effects of verbal and emotional abuse linger for years. They have endured years of being told that they are worthless, incapable, and worse. Providing consistent positive feedback is a way to counteract that abuse. Recognize and praise survivors for each positive step they make, taking into consideration that for some small successes are grand successes and work with them toward achieving their goals by encouraging them to be proud of their own successes.

Empower Others to be Their Best

Before you can empower others you must first have an understanding and acceptance of who you are. You must go through the process of self-actualization. Self-actualization is about knowing and accepting who you are so that you can become your very best self. Knowing and accepting yourself, helps you support survivors on their path to self-actualization. When you work to empower others to identify and meet their needs, engage in healthy relationships and support and recognize others' achievements, you support them on their path to self-actualization.

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world." – Mahatma Gandhi

Coalition Building and the Bigger Picture

Part of working as an advocate means understanding some complex and intricate systems that are keys to housing, public assistance and other vital resources that will only improve the options you have to empower survivors. You should commit yourself to developing relationships and build alliances with community partners.

At times, you may be challenged to work with internal and external agency colleagues with different perspectives, opinions and working from different foundations. At times, the survivors you work with will pose challenging situations. You do not need to like every survivor who you assist.

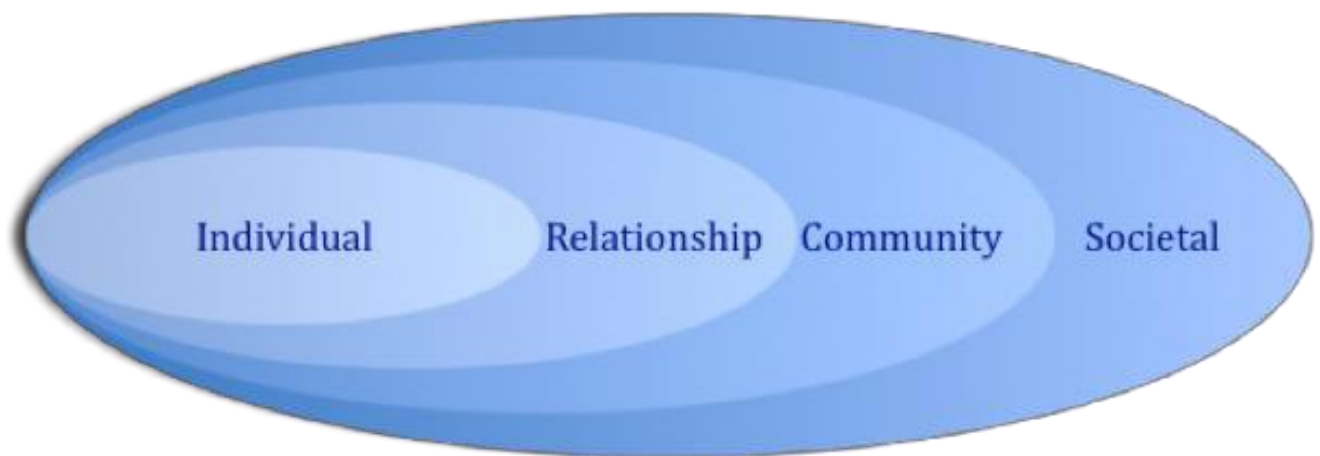
There will be successes and there will be disappointments and learning experiences. By routinely doing an internal check-in, you strengthen your vision for the work. You may find it useful to identify the values and skills you bring to this work. Self-reflection can serve to prevent burn out and identify when you need to set better boundaries.

Good practice is to engage in healthy relationships in all aspects of your life. This includes using ethical communication, good boundaries, respect, and healthy conflict resolution with the survivors you work with, colleagues, volunteers, family and friends.

Improving your knowledge about your organization will help you connect your day-to-day work with the organization's mission. Review the mission, vision, values and culture of your agency to help recalibrate yourself from time to time. As you begin to feel comfortable in your position, you can later expand to better understand policies, funder requirements and strategic plans.

Creating and fostering positive engagement with your community by promoting a Coordinated Community Response that works cooperatively and seamlessly is vital to improve the outcome of many survivors' lives. You and each of your co-workers play an important role in building and nurturing collaborations on behalf of survivors.

Lastly, recognize you are one in a larger movement to end family violence, abuse and oppression. At times, work may seem frustrating or endless. Advocates often join this movement for different reasons. Most are personal and motivate advocates when they face difficult situations. Serve as a role model and promote a culture of nonviolence, respect and empowerment with both words and actions.



Informed by the Social Ecological Model

Safety Planning

As advocates, we need to assist survivors in planning for their safety. A safety plan is not static; it must change as conditions change. It is good to check in with survivors often about their safety needs. Safety planning should be completed for:

Short-Term Safety Needs

Develop strategies to stay safe during a crisis, while leaving, after leaving and on a day-to-day basis. It may include legal remedies that can enhance safety for some: calling 911 or obtaining a Protective Order. You should support the survivor in assessing risk based on batterer's current and past actions, threats and access to weapons. Use that information to discuss the safety options that may work best for the survivor. Help the survivor identify specific concerns and recognize strategies that have helped promote safety in the past. Basic safety planning forms and information are available online at:

- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
- [Office of the Attorney General](#)

Long-Term Safety Needs

Develop strategies and goals for long-term safety and self-sufficiency. It can be helpful to ask the survivor about any past barriers to getting and staying out of the abusive relationship. Ask what might be needed to overcome those barriers in the future and try to create action steps to meet those needs. The focus of a long-term safety plan is survivor independence and autonomy.

See the Resource Guide in Appendix for more Safety Planning resources.

Confidentiality and Advocacy

Confidentiality is the fundamental component of advocacy. Confidentiality policies exist to protect the safety and privacy of those we serve.

- It is vital you explain the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances in which confidentiality would have to be broken (reporting child abuse, court orders) under your agency's policies.
- Inform survivors their personal information is theirs to control, and it's their decision when, how and with whom they will share information.
- Explain what kinds of records will be kept about the survivors, who has access to them, how information is reported and how records are maintained and protected.
- If survivors would like for you to disclose information about them, you should talk with survivors about the specific information to be disclosed, how the information will be shared, and the risks of disclosing any information. If your program is funded by the Health and Human Services Commission, this conversation should take place before survivors sign consent for Release of Information (ROI). **All ROIs are statutorily required to be time-limited and specific to the agency receiving the information.**

Risks to disclosing information:

- Your agency has no control over what happens to that information once it is released.
- There will be a record that the client was served by a family violence agency.
- This could create a risk of being located.

Other agency service providers or individuals not affiliated with the family violence agency may express frustration about confidentiality policies and procedures. They may react with anger when they hear, “I cannot confirm or deny if that person is here.” It is best to be courteous but firm. It is always a good idea to discuss any matters related to confidentiality with your supervisor.

All client-related materials must remain secured inside your agency at all times. Requests for copies of client files or information should be processed through the Custodian of Record— a designated staff person responsible for the security and maintenance of agency records.

Subpoenas are court orders to appear in court to testify or produce files. If you receive a subpoena to testify, speak to your supervisor about how to proceed. All subpoenas for records must be processed through the Custodian of Records.

Documentation

Documentation (record keeping, service logs, case notes) exists to ensure staff and agency accountability, and entries should assist survivors in their process of seeking safety and self-sufficiency. Documentation requirements are different for various governing bodies such as funders, Board of Directors and supervisory staff. Some staff, such as licensed counselors or social workers, may have additional documentation requirements set by their licensing board. In order to document appropriately and accurately, it is important to understand what information is being recorded and why. Talk to your supervisor about your agency’s documentation policies and practices.

General tips for appropriate documentation:

- Provide only the minimum information necessary to meet funder requirements and support your work.
- Make sure information that needs to be included is accurate and factual.
- Keep entries clear and concise and proofread your work.
- Never include a safety plan.
- Do not include excessive details or information that is not required in a client file.
- Do not make judgments, give opinions or diagnose.

Batterers are often savvy or have attorneys who could potentially subpoena a survivor’s file through legal action such as a custody case. It is essential to ask yourself the following questions so you will make good choices about what information to include, and how to include it:

- Could the information in the file inadvertently or unjustly harm the victim?
- Would the information reveal the location of victim or compromise the victim or the children’s safety?
- Does the information help increase the victim’s safety?
- Is this information necessary to increase victim safety, increase the offender’s accountability, comply with federal/state laws, and/or protect the agency’s liability?

Need More?

For an in-depth look at Confidentiality and Documentation, review *Confidentiality: An Advocate’s Guide* offered by the Battered Women’s Justice Project.



Click on the icon to download!

Chapter 3: Navigating the Legal System and Legal Options for Survivors

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Understand the process in which criminal family violence is prosecuted.
 - ✓ Gain knowledge about basic types of Protective Orders and process for obtaining one.
 - ✓ Review legal options for immigrant victims of family violence.
 - ✓ Identify differences between legal advocacy and legal advice.
-

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Criminal Law and Civil Law

Criminal law is the body of statutory and common law that deals with crime and the legal punishment of criminal offenses. It is initiated by the state and, typically, victims are witnesses for the state. The defendant has the right to appointed counsel and the timeline for prosecution is set by the court. Typically, penalties are immediate after conviction through the penal system.

Civil law handles disputes between individuals and other individuals or organizations. The goal is to compensate a victim, usually by payment of money; to the extent they have been harmed. A victim in a criminal case can also personally sue someone in civil court under certain circumstances.

Criminal Prosecution of Family Violence Cases

Criminal family violence (as defined by Texas Family Code 71.004): An act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself.

Barriers to getting help through criminal prosecution of family violence:

- Most types of abuse are not criminal
- It is estimated that only 10% of criminal family violence is reported.
- When violence is reported, most are charged as misdemeanors.
- Victims are often fearful and/or distrustful of the legal system and have difficulty accessing service.

Victims often fear for their safety or that of their children. They tend to have limited access to financial resources, support networks and legal assistance.

- Victims may fear that involvement in the legal system could lead to deportation, criminal charges, losing custody of their children or other negative effects.
- Victims may feel that they may not be taken seriously due to history of not cooperating, drug or alcohol abuse, mental health issues, undocumented status or criminal record.

- Victims who witness the criminal justice system failing to hold batterers accountable are less likely to report abuse in the future.

Who is involved in the criminal prosecution of Family Violence cases?

Police Officers/ Detectives	Victim Services Counselors	Prosecuting District or County Attorneys	Victim Witness Coordinators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to emergency calls, take reports. • Interview victims, suspects, witnesses. • Gather evidence and build a case to submit to the prosecutor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support, referrals and resources to crime victims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review cases and evidence gathered by law enforcement officers. • Determine whether a case will be prosecuted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information, orientation and support to victims as their cases move through the court system.

Witness Tampering: Batterers will often attempt to coerce, manipulate, or intimidate their victim to get them to drop charges, recant their statement, or refuse to cooperate with law enforcement. Those actions may be considered witness tampering and could be subject to additional prosecution.

Letters, voicemails, text messages, emails, Facebook postings, and the like could all be evidence of witness tampering. As an advocate, you can let your clients know that they have the option to turn over those communications to law enforcement if they choose. Some victims may decide to try and save the communication but wait to decide if they will turn it over. You should be familiar with the preferred method of evidence collection used by your law enforcement agency.

An Advocate's Role...

- Assist with safety planning.
- Guide victims in documenting their injuries.
- Provide general information about the process of making a police report.
- Provide support or accompaniment to victims when they make a report or give a statement.
- Accompany victims to court hearings.
- Provide information and assistance registering for Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE). VINE provides information about offender status in custody and can send notification to registered parties about transfers or release dates. Registration is available online www.vinelink.com.
- Provide assistance applying for and accessing Crime Victim Compensation Benefits (explained in Chapter 6).

Protective Orders

Protective orders play an important role for many survivors escaping a violent home.

You may have heard about a protective order or even a restraining order. While these sound like very similar protections, they are not.

Protective orders and restraining orders differ in many significant ways:

A Restraining Order:	A Protective Order:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Usually is a provision in another case, such as a divorce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is a separate court case
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is a civil court order	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is a civil court order
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Has civil consequences, which typically only end in a contempt of court charge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Has civil AND criminal consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Usually is a case that an individual needs to hire an attorney to move forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes no fees to petitioner (filing or service)

Other differences include that protective orders include time parameters. Protective orders can be ordered to exceed the previous two-year maximum duration and potentially protect victims for a lifetime.

For a protective order to be granted for a lifetime the court must find that:

- The respondent caused serious bodily injury to the applicant or her family; OR
- The respondent was the subject of two or more previous PO protecting the same applicant AND the protective orders contained findings of family violence.

Protective Orders, an example of a civil case can be requested through the District or County Attorney and are available to victims of family violence, intimate partner stalking, dating violence, and sexual assault. You should be familiar with who in your community files protective orders on behalf of victims and any other specific requirements or policies. Victims also have the legal option of filing on their own behalf using forms at www.texaslawhelp.org.

While these are civil orders protective orders are criminally enforceable if violated. They can order batterers (respondents) to keep distance from a victim's home, workplace, school or daycare, and can limit communication by the batterer. Respondents are prohibited from possessing a firearm.

There are many types of protective orders, but these are the most common used by survivors:

Temporary Ex Parte Protective Orders (TExPO)

Issued by the court at the time an application for a final protective order is filed. These are based on the applicant's affidavit and any corroborating evidence available, although corroborating evidence such as police or medical reports are not required. These can be filed in the county in which the victim OR the batterer lives. TExPOs last up to 20 days and can be extended for additional 20-day periods at the applicant's request or the court's initiative. These orders are criminally enforceable after being personally served to the respondent.

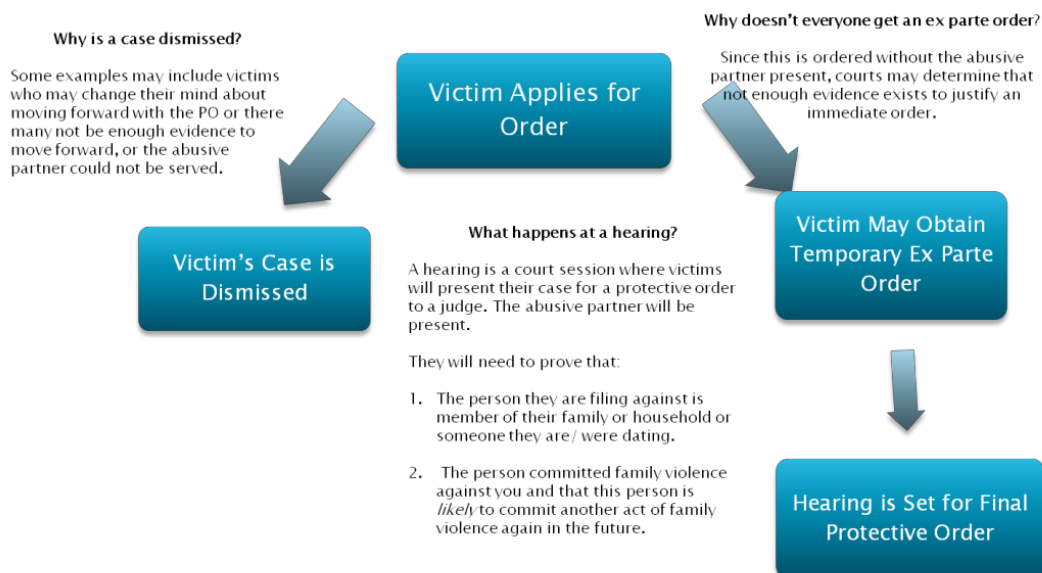
Final Protective Orders

A hearing is set for both parties. These protective orders may be granted for two years for family violence and sexual assault survivors. If the respondent caused serious bodily injury to the applicant or her family or if the respondent was the subject of two or more previous protective orders that protected the same applicant AND the protective orders contained findings of family violence the protective order may be granted for the lifetime of the parties.

Mutual protective orders cannot be granted unless a separate petition is filed by the batterer and granted by the court.

- Child Support and Child Visitation: Some jurisdictions will enter orders for child support payments and child visitation in a final protective order; others will not.

Permanent Protective Order: The Process



Respondents are legally responsible for following the terms of the order. Victims cannot be charged with “violating” their own order. Victims hold the responsibility to use the protective order as a tool for safety. Violations should be reported to the police immediately. A violation of a protective order could lead to criminal consequences such as bond revocation and additional criminal charges, contempt of court and fines. Violation of a protective order (first offense) is a class A misdemeanor or a 3rd degree felony (second offense). Law enforcement must arrest on any violations which occur in their presence and may arrest if they have reason to believe a violation has occurred. If the batterer is not still at the scene a warrant may be issued. A report should always be made even if no there is no arrest.

Law enforcement agencies and state courts are required to recognize protective orders issued in another state or jurisdiction. Though victims are not required to register their order from another state, doing so can make enforcement easier.

Magistrate’s Order for Emergency Protection (MOEP)

Also known as an Emergency Protective Order, is mandatory if a criminal offense involves serious bodily injury or the use/exhibition of a deadly weapon during the assault. MOEP are issued at the batterer’s initial court appearance at which bond is set and can be requested by victims, guardians of the victim, peace officers, prosecutors or magistrates on their own motion. Victims do not need to be present for issuance. Orders can be issued for up to 91 days depending on the facts of the offense. A batterer must be arrested for a MOEP to be issued because they only occur at the initial court appearance post-arrest.

Legal Help for Immigrant Victims

Immigrant victims of family violence are among the most isolated and vulnerable individuals you may serve. Many immigrant victims will be unfamiliar with US laws and systems and may not have any supportive family or friends in the area.

Batterers commonly terrorize victims with threats that they will be deported if they call the police, that no one will believe their outcries; and that their children will be taken away.

Our movement works to inform communities that no one deserves to be abused and that help is available regardless of immigration status. The federal government recognized immigrant victims of abuse require support and protection, and enacted legislation to offer that protection.

[Texas Advocacy Guide](#)

For more comprehensive information about immigration legal remedies for victims of domestic violence and how you can assist as an advocate, see the Immigration Chapter of the Texas Advocates’ Guide.

Here is an overview of some of the types of immigration relief that may be available:

VAWA Self--Petitioning

Established by the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA protection exists to help battered immigrant women married (including common law married in Texas) to US Citizens or Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) to establish their own lawful permanent status without the cooperation of the batterer. Applicants must be able to show that they are victims of domestic violence, married to a US Citizen or LPR in a good faith marriage, and of good moral character.

U Visa

The U Visa is an opportunity for immigration relief available to immigrant victims of certain crimes, including domestic violence. There is no marriage requirement for a U Visa, nor is the immigration status of the abuser relevant. However, applicants must be able to obtain certification from a law enforcement officer stating they are the victim of a qualifying crime and cooperating with the investigation and/or prosecution and also stating they suffered harm as a result of the crime.

- There is a similar visa available to victims of trafficking called a T Visa.

Other Immigration Assistance

VAWA and U Visa cases will probably comprise the majority of immigration cases that you will see. However, there is a range of options for immigration relief, and it is vital that you refer immigrant victims to an immigration attorney for consultation and assessment so that all options may be explored.

Survivors of Family Violence with Limited English Proficiency

Language access can be an additional barrier to getting needed help. Accessing the criminal and civil court systems for help with protective orders, divorce and child custody are often part of the process towards achieving safety. Survivors of family violence with limited English proficiency have the right to equal and meaningful access to the courts. Persons with limited English proficiency include individuals who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English, which includes individuals who are D/deaf or hard of hearing.

Recipients of federal funds must comply with federal laws relating to language access, which include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Texas criminal courts receive federal funding and must offer LEP populations equal access to the justice system through interpretation, translation and auxiliary aids such as a TDD, or Telecommunication Device for the D/deaf.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964- Prohibits national origin discrimination by recipients of federal funds. Different treatment based on a person's inability to speak English may be a type of national origin discrimination.

Americans with Disabilities Act- State entities are required to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters or auxiliary aids to ensure effective communication with D/deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

- ✓ [Click here to order Texas Council on Family Violence brochures on the rights of survivors with LEP available in English and Spanish as well as brochures to assist advocates in promoting language access for survivors.](#)

An Advocate's Role...

- Inform clients that immigration relief is often available to immigrant victims of abuse and provide general information about the types of relief (VAWA, U Visa).
 - Partner with immigrant legal service providers, interpreters and culturally specific agencies in your communities.
 - Refer for legal consultation or representation. Encourage any immigrant victim to seek legal consultation with an immigration attorney and provide referrals to free or low-cost options.
 - Provide referrals for culturally-appropriate support services.
 - Help gather support documents. Applying for immigration relief is a detailed and cumbersome process. It can be helpful to talk through a list of required documents and brainstorm ways to try and access needed documents safely.
 - Write letters of support. Document the type of program where you work, your job title, how you met the client, dates of service and any relevant details that can help strengthen the client's application. Relevant details may vary, but it is generally helpful to document your knowledge of the abuse and how you gained that knowledge (what client reported at intake, observation of any injuries), as well as any facts that speak to client strengths (always on time for appointments, set and achieved specific goals).
 - Before you write a letter for any client, you must know your agency policies. Are you permitted to write letters on behalf of clients? In what context? What are the agency guidelines?
 - In addition to any agency guidelines, remember that anything you write for or about a client must be clear, concise and factual. Write observations not opinions.

For example, "I met with Mary eight times during her two-month shelter stay. She arrived on time and prepared for her meetings." These statements are facts based on observation. In contrast, "I think Mary is a responsible and reliable person" is an opinion. Instead of giving your opinion, document the facts that caused you to form your opinion.
 - Try to keep things brief by keeping your focus on the most relevant details: documentation of abuse, if applicable, and highlighting client strengths and accomplishments.
- ✓ [For more information click here to read "Assisting Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence: Advocate's Guide," available through the Battered Women's Justice Project.](#)

Family Law Cases

Family Law Cases are civil legal matters pertaining to the family. Since they are civil matters, each party is responsible for finding and paying their own attorney.

Divorce

A divorce will dissolve a marriage, determine custody and support of any children of the marriage, and determine the distribution of marital property, assets, and debts. It can take from a few months to upward of two years to finalize a divorce. The more elements of the case that are in dispute, the longer it is likely to take.

Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship (SAPCR)

For couples with children, the legal process of determining custody and support of the children is called a Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship (SAPCR). In divorces, conservatorship (custody) and possession (visitation) are determined in that case.

Custody Challenges for Victims of Family Violence:

Family Violence victims may find themselves vulnerable as they move through the family law courts for many reasons. If they have children with their abuser, they may be forced to have ongoing contact with the batterer for visitation and exchange of the children.

The focus of family law is on the best interest of the children. It is a common expectation that parents should be cooperative, have positive interactions and get along for the benefit of the children.

In Texas, it is presumed that joint custody, in which parents make decisions about the children together, is best for the children—except in cases involving family violence where there is no balance of power and joint determinations cannot be made fairly or safely. A savvy batterer can use the legal system to manipulate, harass, control or punish his victim for years.

- ✓ For an in-depth look at the challenges victims face in custody cases with their abusers, see Lundy Bancroft's article titled "[Understanding the Batterer in Custody and Visitation Disputes](#)."

Child Support

Child support may be ordered in many different ways. Some examples of legal matters that may include an order for child support include Dissolution of Marriage (Divorce), Suit Affecting a Parent – Child Relationship (SAPCR-Custody), and Final Orders of Protection under the Texas Family Code (depending on jurisdiction). If child support is established in one of these cases it is recommended that the survivor "register" the case with the Texas Office of the Attorney General.

An Advocate's Role...

- Assist with safety planning, including long-term safety planning for visitation exchanges, if applicable.
- Inform clients that if the violence is not disclosed to their attorney, the attorney may not be able to get safe court orders. Client should always stay in communication with their attorney.
- Provide general information about types of family law cases.
- Provide referrals for free or low-cost legal consultation or representation in family law matters.
- Provide accompaniment to court hearings.

Outside of establishment within another type of order, the **Office of the Attorney General (OAG): Child Support Division provides child support services to parents**. This includes parent locator services; paternity establishment; and establishment of an order that includes financial and medical support and access and visitation to the children, collection and enforcement services. The OAG Child Support Division will only enforce child support orders for which a parent has applied for their services. (For example, a parent that has only “registered” an order that was established as part of a divorce would need to apply for services through the OAG in order to prompt enforcement.)

It is important to note that access and visitation (custody) of the children will be established as a part of an OAG child support order. Further, the OAG child support process requires some interaction between the parents. If survivors need their address protected or further safety precautions taken, they should request a **Family Violence Indicator** on their case. For more information about the child support process and protections to victims of family violence who choose to pursue child support.

- ✓ For more information, visit www.getchildsupportsafely.org

NOTE: Cooperation with Child Support is mandatory for recipients of certain Public Benefits. However, victims of family violence can request the **Family Violence Option** and get a Good Cause Waiver to not participate if it would be dangerous to do so. More information about Good Cause Waivers and HHSC benefits can be found in Chapter 4.

Child Protective Services (CPS)

In family violence cases where children are present, law enforcement is required to report to Child Protective Services. This means that many domestic violence victims will have CPS involved in their lives at some point.

A common way abusers instill fear in victims is to threaten to have their children removed. This is particularly true in cases involving immigrant victims. Misunderstanding of the system can lead victims to not disclose abuse. In some circumstances, victims have been charged for neglect or failure to protect because of remaining in a violent home.

Investigation

CPS investigates and makes a determination if child abuse or neglect occurred. CPS determinations are reason to believe (that abuse or neglect occurred), unable to determine (if abuse or neglect occurred), or ruled out (no abuse or neglect occurred). The CPS case may be closed, regardless of the determination, if the child is currently safe and not believed to be at risk for future abuse or neglect.

Services Only

CPS may stay involved with a family by creating a service plan outlining certain steps the parent can take to avoid additional action on the part of CPS. CPS may require participation in support services as a part of the safety plan. This involvement is termed services only.

Court-Ordered Services

CPS may elect to seek a court order mandating the parent to participate in services and follow a service plan. If the court is not aware of the abuse, an unsafe or incomplete service plan may be ordered. Non-compliance with court-ordered services can lead to removal of the children from the parent's care.

Termination

In severe cases, CPS seeks to terminate parental rights. This can happen if the parent is non-compliant with CPS or if the parent does not wish to regain custody of the child.

Legal Advocacy vs. Legal Advice

As you can see, navigating the civil and criminal justice system is a challenging arena where survivors need a great deal of support. To provide that support you must know your role as an advocate, but also understand the limits of that role.

Advocates CAN provide general legal information, referrals and support to survivors. Advocates CANNOT provide legal advice, counsel or representation.

You may want to remind survivors you work with that you are not an attorney and cannot provide legal advice.

An Advocate's Role...

- Inform survivors of the "Affidavit of Non-Disclosure" form to request address confidentiality.
- At survivors request, join for interviews & initial meetings regarding benefits

Chapter 4: Economic Options for Survivors

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify the dynamics of financial abuse.
 - ✓ Identify public benefits and review application processes.
 - ✓ Identify economic resources including child support, employment services and tax breaks.
 - ✓ Identify additional resources available to immigrant survivors, older survivors or survivors with disabilities.
-

“Being oppressed means the absence of choices.” – Bell Hooks

Financial Abuse

Financial Abuse (or Economic Abuse) is a common, but often overlooked, element of an abusive relationship. Batterers will often use financial means to obtain and maintain control and keep their partner trapped in the relationship.

Types of Financial Abuse (from the National Network to End Domestic Violence All State Financial Empowerment Curriculum):

- Controlling all decisions of how money is spent.
- Withholding money or “giving an allowance.”
- Withholding basic living resources, medication or food.
- Prohibiting partner to work or earn money.
- Stealing partner’s identity, money, credit or property.

Even after leaving an abusive partner, a survivor of family violence may spend years coping with the consequences of the financial abuse.

Long-term impacts may include:

- **Lack of knowledge about money matters and inexperience managing finances:** Some survivors may never have opened or managed a bank account, paid bills or used credit.
- **Poor work history:** Batterers may forbid their partners to work, force them to work, or interfere with employment to the point of causing poor attendance, performance or job loss.
- **Poor credit:** It is not uncommon for abusers to destroy their partner’s credit or property in an attempt to further isolate them and trap them in the relationship. To this end, batterers may take out extensive debts in the partner’s name with no intention of repaying them.
- **Other consequences:** Some batterers may force their partners to engage in illegal acts that might include forcing them to sign fraudulent tax documents or government benefits applications.

An Advocate's Role...

Assess

Explore survivors' financial history, values about money, resources and barriers. With a clear inventory of financial strengths and obstacles, you can better support survivors to take steps toward financial empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Get Educated

Financial education is an important step to economic empowerment. It is beneficial for advocates to take financial literacy training in order to better support survivors with appropriate financial education and money management training. Basic economic advocacy includes taking an inventory of income, resources and debts; creating a budget; and creating a plan for short and long-term financial goals.

Inform and Refer

As you become familiar with survivors' individual needs and goals, you can provide support as they develop a financial plan and take steps to create a safe and independent future. To that end, it is important to develop a strong knowledge of the economic options available to survivors in Texas, as well as information about local resources.

Public Benefits

Public assistance is available to those who qualify based on income and other eligibility criteria.

- ✓ [Click here to order TCFV publications: Economic Options for Survivors Brochure, Family Violence Option Brochure, Family Violence Option Card for Survivors, Immigrants' Access to Public Benefits](#)

Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is a monthly cash grant (for children and their parents/relatives who are living with them) that is linked to the parent's/relative's participation in work activities and cooperation with program requirements.

Survivors may claim **Good Cause, also known as the Family Violence Option**, to be exempted from certain requirements that would place the participant or child in danger.

- **Child Support Requirement:** If TANF participants need a waiver from the child support requirement, they should inform their Texas Works Advisor at the local Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) benefits granting office.
- **Work Requirement:** If they need a waiver from the work requirement, they should inform their caseworker at the local workforce office.

One-Time TANF (OTTANF)

OTTANF is a one-time cash payment of \$1000 for families in crisis. Recipients of OTTANF are not eligible to apply for TANF for 12 months.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

This was formerly the food stamp program: SNAP is assistance to help low-income individuals, families and elderly people purchase food.

[Texas Advocacy Guide](#)

For more comprehensive information about public benefits and victims of domestic violence and how you can assist as an advocate, see Chapter 11 in the Texas Advocates' Guide.

Family violence is a basis for **Good Cause exemption from Employment and Training (E & T) requirements.**

- In order to receive a waiver for family violence from E & T requirements, a SNAP participant will need to contact the Texas Workforce Center, let their case manager know that they are a victim of family violence and request Good Cause.

Medicaid

Medicaid is government-funded health insurance for low-income adults and children. Income eligibility varies by age of child. Medicaid automatically covers TANF recipients.

To apply for TANF, OTTANF, SNAP or Medicaid, visit a local office and apply in person or submit an application online, by fax, or by mail.

- ✓ You can locate an office, do an eligibility screening, submit an online application or check the status of your case at www.yourtexasbenefits.com.
- ✓ You can locate an office, request an application by mail, start an application over the phone, check the status of your case or report changes by calling 2-1-1.

For more information about HHSC benefits eligibility and processing, you can access and review the Texas Works Handbook at www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/texasworks.

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

CHIP is health coverage for children in families that earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level with sliding scale co pays.

Pregnant women not eligible for Medicaid may be eligible for CHIP coverage of prenatal care, as well as labor and delivery services, if they meet eligibility criteria.

- ✓ You can do an eligibility screening or apply online at www.chipmedicaid.org.
- ✓ You can apply over the phone by calling toll free to 1-877-543-7669.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC):

WIC is a program providing nutrition education, food, formula and other services for low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children under five. WIC clients receive vouchers for certain food items they can use at grocery stores throughout the state. Food packages vary depending on the needs of the client, but may include infant formula, milk, cheese, cereal, juice, eggs, peanut butter and beans.

- ✓ Call the Texas WIC Program at 1-800-942-3678 for local WIC clinic locations.
- ✓ Visit <http://txhealth.ziplocator.com/> to locate the nearest WIC clinic.

Child Support

Information about accessing child support was covered in some detail in Chapter 3.

Parents may apply to receive child support through the Office of the Attorney General. In some cases, survivors may apply to the OAG for child support enforcement to receive payments already ordered in a divorce, child custody suit or Protective Order.

- ✓ Visit www.getchildsupportsafely.org for information written to help survivors safely navigate the child support system.

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

TWC offers career development information, job search resources, training programs and unemployment benefits.

Workforce Solutions Offices: Job search support and career development services are available through the Workforce Solutions Offices.

Workforce Solutions Offices also administer additional support services and program for those who qualify:

Choices (TANF Employment and Training Program)

Choices are a mandatory program for adult TANF recipients unless they are exempted for Good Cause or other reasons. Choices may be able to provide childcare and transportation assistance as well as other work-related support to participants.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

WIA is an employment support and training program that can provide job search assistance, job training, childcare and transportation assistance, as well as other work-related support to those who qualify.

SNAP Employment and Training (E & T) Program

SNAP E & T is a mandatory employment program for SNAP recipients ages 16 to 59 who are either unemployed or underemployed and not otherwise exempt. Support services may be available to participants.

Child Care

Child Care is a support service available to parents (of children under 13) who work, go to school or participate in job training. Parents may be given priority for access based on their participation in an employment program like Choices. Wait lists are also common.

- ✓ To locate the nearest Workforce Solutions office, visit <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/> and click on the link to Workforce Solutions Offices and Services in the left hand menu.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

TWC administers the Unemployment Insurance Program. Unemployment Insurance (UI) is an employer-paid program that pays benefits to qualified workers unemployed through no fault of their own. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) pays temporary financial help based on workers' previous earnings, while they are looking for other work.

Survivors who must leave their job to protect themselves from family violence or stalking are eligible for unemployment compensation if they show:

- An active or recently-issued protective order documenting the occurrence of or potential for family violence or stalking against the employee, OR
- A police record documenting family violence or stalking against the employee, OR
- A physician's statement or other medical documentation of family violence against the employee.

None of the above information may be disclosed to any person without the consent of the survivor/employee.

- To apply online, visit www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/uiclaim.html.
- To apply by phone, call 1-800-939-6631.

Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC)

CVC is available to victims of crimes involving "criminally injurious conduct" who suffer physical or emotional harm as a result of the crime. In most cases, the applicants must report the crime in a reasonable amount of time and file a CVC application within three years of the date of the crime.

Eligibility, application process and types of benefits are covered in detail in Chapter 6.

[Texas Advocacy Guide](#)

For more comprehensive information about Crime Victims' Compensation and victims of domestic violence and how you can assist as an advocate, see Chapter 14 in the Texas Advocates' Guide.

Taxes

Various tax credits and protections are potentially available to survivors (and others). Individuals may receive refunds for returns filed within three years of the due date.

- ✓ For more information about tax related information that may be beneficial to survivors visit <http://raisetexas.org/>.

Earned Income Tax Credit

A tax credit available to lower-income, working individuals who meet income guidelines and additional eligibility requirements. The credit is available to individuals without children, but the credit increases with the number of eligible children. The Earned Income Tax Credit can mean thousands of dollars refunded to a family.

Child Tax Credit

A tax credit that may be up to \$1000 per qualifying dependent child, subject to income and other eligibility requirements. The Additional Child Tax Credit may also be available, depending on eligibility.

Child and Dependent Care Credit

A credit available to people who, in order to work or to look for work, have to pay for child care services for qualifying dependents under age 13. The credit is also available for those who pay for the care of a spouse or a dependent of any age who lived with them for more than half the year and is physically or mentally incapable of self-care. The credit is a percentage, based on adjusted gross income, of the expenses paid for child and dependent care.

Innocent Spouse Relief

Relief from tax liability, penalties and interest available to spouses who signed joint returns and are now being held responsible for taxes or income of which they were unaware.

- Free tax help is available online through the IRS website at www.irs.gov or by calling 1-800-829-1040.
- The Texas Taxpayer Assistance Project may also be able to answer questions at 1-888-988-9996.
- For additional information on these and other tax resources for survivors, go to www.tcfv.org.

Options for Immigrant Survivors

Eligibility for most Public Benefits or employment-related services is based, in part, on immigration status. Certain core emergency services are available to all.

All immigrants, regardless of their status or when they entered the county, are eligible for emergency benefits including:

- Emergency medical care, emergency Medicaid, immunizations, and diagnosis and treatment of communicable diseases.
- Emergency mental health and substance abuse services.
- WIC.
- Summer food programs and school lunch programs.
- Public education.
- Any program necessary to protect life and safety that is not income conditional (shelters, food banks).

Workers at these programs are not authorized to ask for verification of immigration status.

A parent, regardless of immigration status, can apply for and receive Public Benefits on behalf of US Citizen children if the family meets other eligibility criteria (i.e. income guidelines).

Eligibility for non-emergency services and benefits is very specific depending on a person's immigration status and the type of program they are trying to access. To best assist an immigrant survivor, it is helpful to seek additional support and information:

- ✓ The Texas Council on Family Violence's Public Policy Department can answer questions and requests for technical assistance regarding options for immigrant survivors of abuse. Call (800) 525-1978.
- ✓ The National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women provides technical assistance to advocates and other providers serving immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or trafficking. Contact at www.immigrantwomennetwork.org/contact.htm.

Options for Survivors with Disabilities

Survivors with disabilities may be eligible for additional support services.

Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSDI and SSI are monthly cash disability benefits paid to those who meet qualifying criteria. SSI recipients receive Medicaid coverage. After a waiting period, SSDI recipients receive Medicare coverage.

- ✓ Find a local Social Security Office, find detailed information about program eligibility and benefits, and apply online at www.ssa.gov.

Guardianship

In some cases, an adult with a disability may have a legally appointed guardian.

- ✓ To learn more about guardianship and how to provide safety and support services to a survivor with a guardian, please read “Guardianship: What is it and When Does It Matter?” by Amy M. Young for Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, available at www.tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/article-mar-08-guardianship.pdf.

Disability Rights Texas

Formerly Advocacy, Inc., Disability Rights Texas offers information, referrals, and legal assistance to people with disabilities.

- ✓ More information is available at www.disabilityrightstx.org and survivors can call for an intake toll free at 1-800-252-9108.

Adult Protective Services (APS)

APS is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities.

- ✓ Information, including APS handbooks, is available online at www.dfps.state.tx.us/adult_protection/about_adult_protective_services/.
- ✓ To report abuse, call 1-800-252-5400 or use the secure website: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels provide homebound or congregate meals to older adults or people with disabilities who need additional, ongoing assistance to meet basic dietary needs.

- ✓ To find a nearby program, visit <http://www.mealsonwheelstexas.org/directoryListings>.

Options for Older Survivors

Older survivors may be eligible for additional support services.

Social Security

Social Security is a monthly cash retirement benefit paid to those who meet qualifying criteria. Social Security recipients also receive Medicare coverage.

- ✓ Find a local Social Security Office, find detailed information about program eligibility and benefits, and apply online at www.ssa.gov.

Chapter 5: Housing Advocacy

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify practices in conducting a housing assessment and addressing survivors' concerns.
 - ✓ Identify affordable housing resources.
 - ✓ Identify housing protections for survivors.
-

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned." – Maya Angelou

Housing and Domestic Violence

There are a number of reasons that victims may stay with an abusive partner or even return to the abusive relationship. Survivors tell us one of the largest barriers to escaping an abusive relationship is the need for safe, affordable housing.

Responding to housing concerns requires more than offering basic safety planning and a list of potential apartments. The first step involves taking a housing history, listening and responding to survivor concerns. The Navigating Housing Issues table introduces some common survivor housing concerns and possible supportive responses




An Advocate's Role...

Assessment: As an advocate, you want to be able to provide a thorough assessment to the survivor. To do this, you need to explore:

- Housing History
- Safety Concerns
- Resources
- Eligibility

Information and Referral: Once you have a good picture of the survivor's strengths, resources, needs, barriers and concerns, you can provide information about and referrals to appropriate housing options.



Navigating Housing Issues

What your client says...	My partner always finds me.	I have no idea where to go	I cannot afford a place my own place.	I've never lived on my own.	I have bad credit or criminal history.
Questions to Ask	<p>How do you think your abuser might have found you in the past?</p> <p>Did your abuser ever tell you how you were found?</p> <p>Has your abuser made any specific threats about you leaving?</p> <p>What do you think it will take for you to be safe on your own?</p> <p>What help do you need to stay safe?</p>	<p>What housing options does your community provide?</p> <p>What options meet your clients' needs?</p> <p>How much can your client afford?</p> <p>Where have you lived before?</p> <p>What did you like/dislike about it?</p>	<p>What is your living budget?</p> <p>What low-affordable housing is available?</p> <p>Is transitional housing available?</p> <p>Have you applied to Crime Victims' Compensation?</p>	<p>Does your client know what living "on your own" means?</p> <p>Has your client been exposed to skill-building sessions that discuss independent living?</p> <p>What is your biggest concern about living on your own?</p> <p>What is your preferred living situation?</p>	<p>What do you think is on your credit report?</p> <p>Have you ever been evicted or broken a lease?</p> <p>Do you owe money to any apartment complexes?</p> <p>What kind of charges are on your criminal history?</p> <p>Have you tried to rent an apartment since you've had negative credit/rental/criminal history?</p> <p>What happened (approved, denied, and charged additional deposit)?</p>
Resources to Assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective Order • Relocation • Address Confidentiality Program • Other safety planning resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing search link from housing chapter • Apartment locator service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All State Financial Empowerment Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Skills Classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.annualcreditreport.com

Affordable Housing Programs

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for the implementation and administration of federal housing and development programs. HUD is organized into ten regions throughout the United States. **Texas is in Region VI, with its regional office located in Fort Worth.** This office oversees the four HUD field offices throughout Texas.

- ✓ Contact and jurisdiction information for the Region VI Office in Fort Worth and the field offices in Dallas, Houston, Lubbock, and San Antonio can be found at <http://www.hud.gov/local/index.cfm?state=tx&topic=offices>.

Public Housing Authorities (PHAs)

HUD sets the parameters for the administration of Public Housing and Section 8 and provides suggestions regarding implementation of policies to local PHAs, which administer housing at the community level. There are 214 PHAs in Texas. Some locations have little to no wait for housing, while others may have waiting lists ranging from six months to more than two years.

Public Housing

Public Housing is HUD-subsidized housing owned and operated by the local PHA. Apartment managers, facilities and maintenance staff, and onsite service providers are generally all employees of the local PHA. Rent is calculated based on family income and according to HUD guidelines (usually 30% of adjusted gross income). Qualifying applicants are assigned to housing units based on availability and do not have a choice in their unit location. Public Housing residents can qualify for additional support services and self-sufficiency programs.

Housing Choice Voucher Programs/ Section 8:

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly Section 8) is HUD-subsidized rental assistance administered by the local PHA. Qualified applicants are awarded rental assistance vouchers that may be used to rent a private house, duplex or apartment. The amount of the voucher is based on local rental rates and family size, among other factors. Residents pay a portion of the rental amount, calculated based on family income and according to HUD guidelines (usually 30% of adjusted gross income). Residents may choose where they wish to live as long as the landlord agrees to accept the voucher and the housing meets the local PHA requirements; the total rent does not exceed the amount of the voucher, and the unit falls within the PHA service area. Housing Choice Voucher residents can qualify for additional support services and self-sufficiency programs.

Local Preferences:

Every PHA is permitted to establish local preferences to give priority status to certain populations. If you qualify under a local preference, you may be moved up to the top of the waiting list for either Public Housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program if you are able to submit the required paperwork. Local preferences might include older adults, people with disabilities, individuals or families displaced by natural disasters, or victims of domestic violence. To find out what local preferences are available in your area, contact your PHA.

VAWA protections (VAWA)

VAWA requires PHAs to include the following information in their five-year and annual PHA Plans:

- Any activities, services, or programs provided or offered by an agency, either directly or in partnership with other service providers, to child or adult victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- Any activities, services, or programs provided or offered that helps child or adult victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to obtain or maintain housing.
- Any activities, services, or programs provided or offered to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, or to enhance victim safety in assisted families.
- PHAs are also encouraged to describe in its VAWA statement the PHA procedures in place that assure that tenants are notified of their rights under VAWA.

✓ [Click here to access a list of Public Housing Authorities](#)

✓ [Click here to review the income limits for HUD programs.](#)

✓ The Public Housing Occupancy Guidebook includes information and recommendations for PHA staff on several topics, including a chapter on domestic violence (Chapter 19). [Advocates may access the guidebook by clicking here.](#)

Private Programs

In many communities, you will find affordable housing options that are privately owned and operated, but subsidized by government funds. The government funder sometimes sets the eligibility criteria. To apply, contact the program directly. Waiting lists are common.

Project-Based Section 8

Project-Based Section 8 programs are HUD-funded and run in a similar manner to Public Housing. You apply directly to the apartment complex, and the apartment office administers the waiting list and the admissions process. In some locations, there may be no waiting list, and in others it could be upwards of two years. The quality of Project-Based Section 8 housing varies widely. Rent is calculated based on family income and according to HUD guidelines (usually 30% of adjusted gross income). Project-Based Section 8 housing assistance is only accessed through the property where you apply and are approved; it cannot be transferred to another property.

Tax Credit Apartments

Tax credit apartments offer affordable housing units at below market rent, but the rents are not sliding scale (not calculated based on income). The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) allocates resources through the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. Private developers access these funds to build or develop rental properties that will offer housing units for a range of income levels. Some units are leased at fair market rents and others are leased at reduced rents to individuals and families with lower incomes. To qualify, applicants must prove they earn enough to cover rent and other living expenses (generally 2-3 times the monthly rent), but applicants cannot earn more than the income cap for a specific unit. Income levels and caps are based on the Area Median Family Income guidelines.

Rural Rental Housing

Rural Rental Housing is open to all people with low income. Rent is based on income. The program is designed to make affordable housing available in smaller cities and in rural areas.

Housing for Designated Populations

Many subsidized and affordable housing opportunities are designed (and funded) to serve specific populations. In all of these programs, waiting lists are common.

Supportive Housing Program (transitional or permanent)

A Supportive Housing Program (SHP) may be temporary or permanent. SHPs charge sliding scale rent based on household income and offer supportive services, usually onsite, that promote self-sufficiency. SHPs are often run by a non-profit agency. Eligible populations include homeless individuals or homeless families. Some SHPs may only serve homeless individuals or families in which the head of household has a disability.

Shelter Plus Care(S+C)

S+C provides rental assistance vouchers or sliding scale rental units to people with disabilities and their families. S+C vouchers are often linked with case management and other support services. S+Cs are often administered by a disability service agency or other non-profit agency. S+Cs may serve individuals or families in which the head of household has a disability.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Program

SROs are efficiency apartments available to single individuals with low income. Housing is permanent as long as the resident remains income-eligible. Rent may be a flat rate that is below market rate or it may be sliding scale based on income. Support services are usually available onsite.

Section 811 Housing

Section 811 housing is permanent housing for individuals with a disability or families in which at least one person has a disability. Rent is usually based on income. Support services are available onsite.

Section 202 Housing

Section 202 housing is permanent housing for elderly individuals or families. Rent may be a flat rate that is below market rate or it may be sliding scale based on income. Support services are available onsite.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

HOPWA programs provide rental assistance vouchers and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

VASH provides rental assistance vouchers to homeless veterans.

Housing Protections for Victims of Family Violence

In recognition of the struggles and risks that survivors face when they leave an abusive relationship and try to obtain and maintain safe housing, several laws have been enacted in recent years to offer protection and assistance.

These protections fall into a few different categories:

1. Right to call the police

A victim of family violence in a rental property has the right to seek police and emergency assistance in response to family violence. Landlords are prohibited from:

- Limiting tenants' rights to call for help.
- Imposing penalties for calling for assistance.
- Requiring tenants to waive their rights to call for assistance in order to be eligible to rent.

2. Right to terminate a lease without penalty:

A victim of family violence or sexual assault has the right to terminate a lease in a rental property without penalty.

This right applies to:

- Victims of family violence who have been living with their abuser and who have provided the landlord a Final Protective Order or Temporary Injunction to stop family violence within a divorce.
- Victims of family violence who do not live with their abuser and who have provided the landlord a Temporary ex parte Protective Order, Final Protective Order, OR Temporary Injunction within a divorce AND given the landlord a 30-day notice of termination of the lease in writing.
- Victims of sexual assault who were assaulted in their own home or on the premises of the victim's residence within the previous six months and who have provided the landlord a 30-day notice of termination in writing AND written documentation of the assault that may include:
 - Statement from a licensed health or mental health service provider who examined or evaluated the victim,
 - Authorized sexual assault prevention and crisis services provider who provided the victim services, OR
 - A sexual assault protective order.

This law also applies if the tenant's child is a victim of sexual assault or continuous sexual abuse.

- ✓ Contact TCFV policy department at 1-800-525-1978 for assistance with the 30-day notice form.

3. Help to overcome financial barriers to relocation

- Crime Victims' Compensation Relocation Rental Assistance Benefits can assist victims with relocation expenses and up to three months of rental assistance. These benefits are described in detail in Chapter 6.
- Deposit Waivers: Victims of family violence in most areas throughout Texas can receive waivers of deposit for gas, telephone, and electric services.

- ✓ To download waiver forms, go to www.tcfv.org/policy/forms-and-information/.

4. Help to promote safety

Texas offers an **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** to help victims of family violence, sexual assault and stalking keep their address confidential. ACP is administered by the Office of the Attorney

General (OAG) and provides victims with a substitute post office box address and free mail forwarding service.

To apply: Applicants must meet with a local domestic violence shelter, sexual assault center, law enforcement or prosecution staff member to discuss a safety plan and enroll in the program. The advocate then submits the application directly to OAG. OAG will not accept applications directly from victims.

Program Details

Once the application is approved, the participant will receive an authorization card from the ACP with a substitute post office box address.

- The substitute address may be used to receive first class mail and legal papers, and for most State and local government agencies
 - Magazines, catalogues and packages (including prescriptions) will NOT be forwarded
 - Nongovernmental entities such as banks, credit unions, credit card companies and private utilities are NOT required to accept the ACP address, but they may be willing to do so.
 - Participants must renew their application every three years with a trained advocate.
 - Participants must notify the ACP of a name or address change ten days prior to the change to avoid withdrawal from the program.
- ✓ For information for ACP participants about registering to vote, getting a Texas Driver's License, and registering children in school, visits the OAG website at <https://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/acp.shtml>.

Limits to Confidentiality: The OAG must disclose a participant's true residential, business or school address if:

- Required by court order,
- Requested by a law enforcement agency,
- Requested by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) for the purpose of CPS investigation, or
- Requested by Department of State Health Services (DSHS) or a local health authority for the purpose of making a notification of a communicable disease.

These requirements for disclosure might mean that the ACP is not an appropriate safety tool for victims whose offenders work or have connections in law enforcement, DFPS, or DSHS. It is important to discuss the limits of the ACP with victims during the screening process to ensure that it is a good fit for their safety needs.

Housing Resources

- ✓ You can search for housing programs in your area at www.texashousingcounselor.org.
- ✓ Visit 2-1-1 Texas at www.211texas.org to search for housing resources in your area.
- ✓ Continuum of Care (CoC): HUD allocates homeless assistance grants to organizations that participate in local homeless assistance program planning networks. Each network is called a Continuum of Care (CoC). CoCs allow local organizations to coordinate their efforts to address

housing and homeless issues in their service area. Each large metro area in Texas has its own CoC. Smaller communities and rural areas are able to participate in the Balance of State CoC through the Texas Homeless Network: www.thn.org/faqs/balance-of-state/.

Domestic Violence agencies can play an important role in working with a CoC to:

- Represent the interests of survivors in policy and program development.
 - Gather information necessary to link survivors to needed housing resources.
 - Build awareness of DV issues among other homeless service agencies.
- ✓ For more information about the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness, visit: www.nnedv.org/policy/issues/housing.html.

An Advocate's Role...

Domestic violence agencies should request training before assisting applicants in applying to the Address Confidentiality Program. Agency staff that has received ACP training will then be able to train others within their agency.

Training is available through:

- ✓ OAG by contacting crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us
- ✓ Texas Council on Family Violence at www.tcfv.org, or
- ✓ Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) at www.taasa.org.

Participating agencies should receive training every three years to maintain their status. Agencies will receive enrolling materials, including applications, from the OAG once they complete training

Chapter 6: Crime Victims' Compensation Benefits

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify eligibility requirements to receive benefits.
 - ✓ Review the application process.
 - ✓ Identify the types of benefits available.
-

Victims of violent crime may be eligible to receive benefits through the **Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC)** Program, administered by the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG).

Crime victims may receive information and assistance filling out CVC paperwork by a law enforcement victim liaison, counselor, or coordinator connected with their local police or sheriff's department or prosecutor's office.

However, it is very important for advocates working in Domestic Violence programs to be prepared to offer assistance with CVC because the program can be complicated to navigate and your clients may need some ongoing assistance; the process can be time consuming, but the benefits offered can be an important part of a plan to access safety and security. Some victims may not feel as comfortable working with law enforcement staff on this issue. Please note that, although CVC benefits may be available to victims of any violent crime, this chapter is focused on accessing benefits that may be available to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or related crimes.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Crime Victims' Compensation benefits in Texas, you must:


- Be a victim of a violent crime that occurred in Texas,
- Have reported the crime to law enforcement in a *reasonable* amount of time, There is no clear definition of what is reasonable. If some time or substantial time has elapsed between the date of the crime and the date of the report to law enforcement, it might be helpful and necessary to submit additional documentation and information to support the CVC application.
- Have *cooperated* with law enforcement, CVC staff screen the application and supporting documentation from law enforcement and will deny an application if they determine that the victim was uncooperative or untruthful, among other reasons for denial. This is problematic for a number of reasons including, but not limited to:
 - Victims may fear for their safety or the safety of their children if they are seen cooperating with law enforcement.

- Individuals respond to traumatic events in unpredictable ways. What might appear to be uncooperative behavior may be a result of trauma.
 - Some people are fearful of law enforcement for a variety of reasons (immigration status, prior negative experiences with law enforcement, substance use). Experience tells us that batterers often try to instill a fear of law enforcement in their victims as a tactic to maintain control.
-
- File for CVC benefits within three years of the date of the crime.



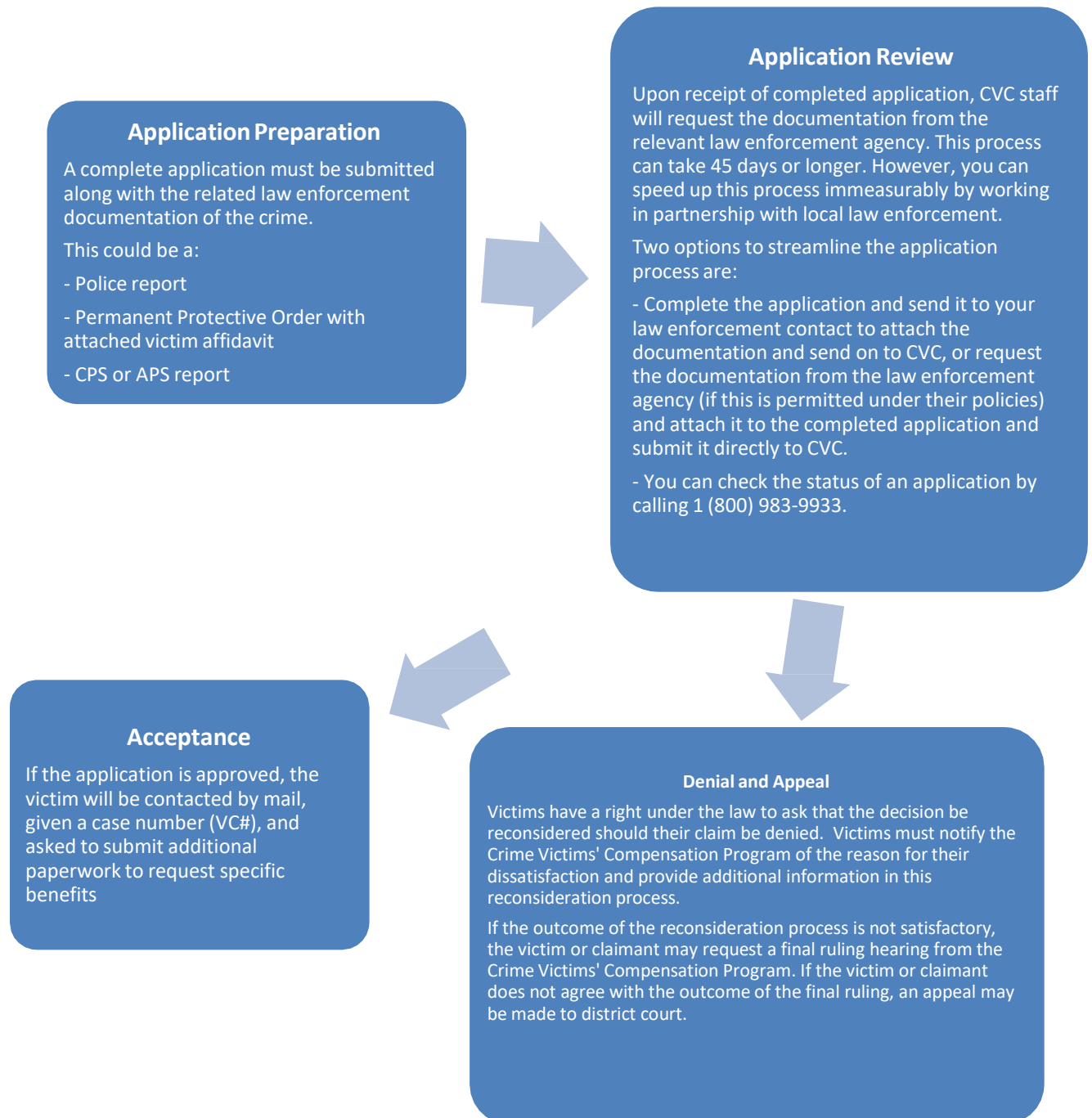
An Advocate's Role...

Having a CVC application denied can feel like an invalidation, disbelief, or denial of the abuse. Be prepared to support survivors if this happens and be able to offer information about the appeal process and support if they elect to proceed with an appeal.



Application Process

Crime Victims' Compensation applications are available online at [Office of the Attorney General's](#) by calling 1 (800) 983-9933. Applications may also be available through your local Crime Victim Liaison or Victim Assistance Coordinator.



Available Benefits

<p>Relocation Rental Assistance</p> <p>Relocation Rental Assistance is only available to victims of Domestic Violence (regardless of the location where the crime occurred) or Sexual Assault (that occurred in the home of the victim). Relocation benefits are designed to help victims overcome financial barriers to accessing safe and secure housing.</p> <p>Relocation expenses include security deposit; application fee; connection fees for electricity, gas, or phone services; movers or moving truck rental; personal vehicle mileage for the move; and up to three months of storage of personal belongings. Relocation expenses are paid up to \$2000.</p> <p>Rental Assistance is available to assist with three months rent or \$1800 (whichever is less).</p> <p>Relocation Rental Assistance benefits can be paid directly to or reimbursed to the victim. Landlords may be paid directly if the victims submit a "Payment Affirmation" form, available online.</p> <p>If the victim does not have a Social Security number or Tax ID number (ITIN), benefits must be paid directly to the landlord, as no checks will be issued directly to victims without a Social Security number or ITIN.</p> <p>To request Relocation Rental Assistance, a victim must submit a completed Relocation Packet (available online) and verification of costs.</p>	<p>Mental Health Counseling</p> <p>CVC provides financial assistance to crime victims who need mental health treatment as an integral part of their recovery. Services must be related to the victimization, necessary, and reasonable.</p> <p>Eligible providers must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychiatrist or other M.D. • Clinical Psychologist • Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) • Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) • Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) • Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) <p>Maximum benefit of \$3000 per individual victim or claimant.</p> <p>Psychiatric medication can also be reimbursed to the victim or claimant for up to one year or until counseling services are terminated (whichever is sooner). Medication costs do not count toward the \$3000 benefit limit.</p> <p>CVC will only pay expenses that are not covered by other insurance or benefit programs, such as private medical insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, or CHIP.</p>	<p>Medical Care</p> <p>CVC pays for crime-related medical expenses.</p> <p>Covered expenses may include, but are not limited to:</p> <p>Medical Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitalization • Surgery • Physician care (including Psychiatric and Mental Health) • Ambulance Transportation • Chiropractic care • Dental Care • Physical Therapy • Prescriptions <p>Medically-Necessary Items that were lost, stolen, broken, or became necessary as a result of the crime, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyeglasses • Hearing Aids • Dentures • Prosthetic Devices <p>Physical Therapy (Up to six months)</p> <p>Benefits may be paid directly to the provider or reimbursed to the victim with proof of payment. CVC will only pay expenses that are not covered by other insurance or benefit programs, such as private medical insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, or CHIP.</p>
<p>Dental Care</p> <p>CVC pays certain benefits for the treatment of dental injuries related to the crime. Services must be related to the victimization, necessary, and reasonable.</p> <p>Dental providers should communicate with CVC prior to providing treatment for pre-authorization.</p> <p>CVC will only pay expenses that are not covered by other insurance or benefit programs, such as private medical insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, or CHIP.</p>	<p>Child Care/ Dependent Care</p> <p>Victims or claimants may qualify for child or dependent care benefits if the needs for childcare is a result of the crime.</p> <p>Childcare expenses may be paid for up to three months.</p> <p>Benefits are paid after services are provided and may be paid directly to the provider or reimbursed to the victim or claimant.</p> <p>Dependent care benefits may also be paid for adult victims who became disabled and in need of care as a result of the crime.</p>	<p>Loss of Income</p> <p>CVC may be able to reimburse victims or claimants for some amount of income lost due to work missed as a result of the crime.</p> <p>Loss of Support</p> <p>CVC may be able to make a one-time support payment to victims to compensate for financial support lost due to the crime.</p>
<p>For more specific information on these benefits and to access forms, please visit https://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims.</p>		

Chapter 7: Connecting Survivors to Community Resources

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify common resources.
 - ✓ Explore resources in your community.
-

“Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar.”

“Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks.” – Gloria Anzaldua

Survivors will have individual needs and goals. It is vital to familiarize yourself with the agencies, organizations, and programs available in your area that the survivors you are working with will commonly access.

The more knowledgeable you are about resources, and the systems and protocols; the more capable you are to help survivors feel prepared and confident about accessing those resources.

Helping survivors bridge the gap between their unmet needs and the appropriate community resources is one of the most important tasks for an advocate. Every step survivors take to build independent support networks is beneficial to long-term safety and autonomy.

In order to find and connect with resources in your community, you may want to start by:

- Reviewing your agencies community resource list.
- Discussing commonly used resources at staffing sessions or with colleagues.
- Reviewing resource lists or resource manuals on hand at your agencies.
- Visiting www.211texas.org and conducting a search by your city or zip code.
- Visiting local offices, agencies and organizations and talking with their staff about the services available.
- Developing relationships and working cohesively with other professionals.

The following list identifies agencies, organizations and programs that you may need to access. While some programs are local resources set up by the city or county, or even churches and other community partners, others are governmental programs.

Hyperlinks are included for your general search of local resources and to help build your understanding of the resource, but speaking with colleagues about local resources will be a great deal of help as you build your own resource contact list.



Law Enforcement & Legal Services

- Local Police and/or Sheriff's Departments
- County and District Attorney's Office
- Domestic Relations Office
- [Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid \(TRLA\)](#)



Public Assistance

- [Local Health and Human Services Benefits Office](#)
- [Women, Infant and Children](#)
- [Child Support Office](#)
- [Workforce Center](#)
- Food Bank and Pantries
- Clothing Donation Center



Housing

- [Public Housing Authority](#)
- Transitional Living Centers



Medical & Services for Survivors with Disabilities

- [Community Mental Health Services](#)
- [Substance Abuse Resources](#)
- Hospitals
- Medical Clinics
- [Department of Aging and Disability Services](#)



Services for Children

- Daycare Services
- [Department of Family and Protective Services Office](#)
- [Child Advocacy Center](#)
- [Child Visitation Center](#)



Education

- General Educational Development (GED) Programs
- English as Second Language (ESL) Programs
- Money Management Programs
- Community Colleges, Universities, and specialized schools

Chapter 8: Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to Family Violence

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Review the dynamics of the CCR and an introduction to the Duluth Model.
 - ✓ Identify roles and responsibilities of community partners in a CCR.
 - ✓ Review benefits of CCR to family violence.
-

A CCR to Family Violence brings criminal justice personnel, family violence advocates, and other community members together to protect victims and hold offenders accountable. Historically, these efforts have led to pro-arrest policies, victim-oriented prosecution, judicial oversight of offenders, probation monitoring and coordination with victim services.

The CCR model was pioneered by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), also referred to as the “Duluth model.” DAIP is an interagency program conceived and implemented in Minnesota in 1980. The City of Duluth was identified as the best city to try to bring criminal and civil justice agencies together to work in a collaborative way to respond to family violence cases. Eleven agencies were initially identified to collaborate: 911, police, sheriff’s and prosecutor’s offices, probation, the criminal and civil courts, the local battered women’s shelter, three mental health agencies and a newly created coordinating organization called the DAIP.

DAIP* philosophy indicates:

- The primary responsibility of placing controls on abusers belongs to the community and the individual abusers, not the victims of abuse.
- Battering is a form of family violence that entails a patterned use of coercion and intimidation, including violence and other related forms of abuse, whether legal or illegal.
- Initiatives must distinguish between, and respond differently to, domestic violence that constitutes battering and cases that do not, and adjust those interventions to the severity of the violence.
- Interventions must account for the economic, cultural and personal histories of the individuals who become abuse cases in the system.
- Both victims and offenders are members of the community; while they must each act to change the conditions of their lives, the community must treat both with respect and dignity and recognize the social causes of their personal circumstances.

*Adapted from www.theduluthmodel.org.

An effective CCR draws upon the strengths of each community entity and identifies opportunities for cross-training and collaboration. Here are a few examples of what different community entities can do:

Health Care System:

- Develop and use safe and effective methods of identification of family violence.
- Provide referral, education and support services to victims and their children.
- Use documentation and reporting protocols for family violence.
- Devote a percentage of training equitable to family violence cases handled.

Justice System:

- Use methods of intervention that do not rely on victim involvement.
- Enforce batterers' compliance and protect victim and children's safety.
- Provide easily accessible and enforceable protection orders.

Education System:

- Support and educate teachers to recognize and respond to symptoms of family violence.
- Teach violence prevention, conflict resolution and communication skills.
- Inform citizens that it is their civil duty to oppose oppression and to support those who are oppressed.

Clergy:

- Speak out against family violence.
- Routinely assess for family violence in premarital and pastoral counseling.
- Oppose the use of biblical or theological justification for family violence.

Media:

- Educate about the dynamics and consequences of family violence, rather than glorify it.
- Cease labeling family violence as "love gone sour" or "a lovers' quarrel."
- Devote an equitable portion of media to women and children's needs.

Employers:

- Intervene against stalkers in the workplace.
- Safeguard victims' employment and careers by providing flexible work schedules and enlightened personnel policies.
- Provide available resources to support and advocate for victims.

Government:

- Enact laws that provide courts with progressive consequences in sentencing.
- Adequately fund victims' services and violence prevention.
- Commute sentences of family violence victims who kill in self-defense.

Social Service Providers:

- Design and deliver services that are responsive to victims and children's needs.
- Utilize methods to help identify family violence.
- Require staff to receive training on etiology and dynamics of family violence.

The end result of a well-maintained coordinated community response:

- Recognize family violence as a community problem.
 - Acknowledge and utilize survivors as experts.
 - Recognize violence as the problem regardless of victim category.
 - Commit to education, prevention and intervention programs.
 - Support community services for victims, batterers, survivors, and family members.
 - Promote access to and use of resources.
- ✓ For a deeper understanding of the advocate's role in a CCR, read: "Advocacy Challenges in a CCR: Protecting Confidentiality While Promoting a Coordinated Response, by Sandra Tibbetts Murphy, for the Battered Women's Justice Project. It is available online at www.bwjp.org/files/bwjp/articles/Advocacy_Challenges_in_a_CCR.pdf.

Chapter 9: Battering Intervention & Prevention Programs (BIPP)

In this chapter you will:

- ✓ Identify role and purpose of Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs.
 - ✓ Learn where to locate an accredited BIPP.
 - ✓ Explore BIP programming.
 - ✓ Review important information for survivors whose abusers are enrolled in a BIPP.
-

Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs (BIPPs) consist of classes for family violence offenders in which offenders are held accountable for past abusive behaviors and taught the fundamentals of leading a nonviolent lifestyle. Although BIPPs work directly with offenders, the underlying goal of these programs is to enhance the safety of victims of family violence and their children.

BIPPs exist to hold batterers accountable for their abusive actions, to promote nonviolence, and to enhance victim safety. BIPPs are an important component to a CCR.

BIPPs in Texas provide behavioral and cognitive methods of intervention by focusing on the specific actions undertaken by the family violence offender. BIPP Accreditation Guidelines state that BIPPs will use “an approach that assigns responsibility for violence solely to batterers, clarifies that family violence is not provoked, and provides a strategy for assisting batterers in taking responsibility for the violence and abuse.”

- A BIPP course must be a minimum of 18 weeks and 36 class hours, but they can be longer.
- BIPP courses are not free, but many offer sliding fee scales.

There are currently over 70 BIPPs across Texas with varying status in the accreditation process and 22 state-funded BIPPs. TCFV monitors state-funded BIPPs for compliance with state standards and provides training and technical assistance to all BIPPs.

- ✓ You can locate a BIPP through the TCFV Service Directory at www.tcfv.org/service-directory/.

The majority of offenders entering a BIPP are mandated to do so, but some are self-referred. Common sources of mandatory referrals are:

- Courts
- District and County Attorneys
- Probation or Parole Officers
- Child Protective Services

The success of offenders in a BIPP depends on their willingness to accept responsibility for their actions and desire to change. As a victim advocate, please be mindful that:

- Offenders are required to sign consent for the release of information when they enter a BIPP so that the program may contact the victim to inform them of program entry and exit dates.
- If BIPPs have access to victims' contact information, they are required to notify victims if BIPPs have reason to fear for their safety.
- BIPPs are strongly encouraged to refer victims to a DV service agency for assistance with safety planning and other needs.

If you are working with a victim whose offender is enrolled in a BIPP, it may be helpful to provide them with general information about BIPPs and discuss safety planning and realistic expectations for offender change.

- ✓ TCFV created a brochure: "Is He really Going to Change this Time?" specifically for victims whose offenders are enrolled in a BIPP. It is available, in English and Spanish, at www.tcfv.org/resources/materials-for-programs/.

For more information about Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs, refer to the BIPP section in the Resource Guide.

Chapter 10: Doing the Work

In this chapter, you will:

- ✓ Explore how your identity shapes your perspective.
 - ✓ Review appropriate boundary setting for advocates.
 - ✓ Identify the importance of finding support systems and attending to self care.
-

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” – Audre Lorde

Family Violence Advocacy is important, meaningful work, but it is also intense and demanding. If you have strong self-awareness, connection to the mission and values of your organization and the movement, and a supportive network, you are well on your way to finding balance and fulfillment in your advocacy.

Getting to Know Yourself Better

The Social Ecological Model in Chapter 2 highlights the importance of self-knowledge and self-awareness because the individual is at the core of every interaction. In order to come to this work with an objective, open mind, you must recognize your own cultural lens and perspective on the world.

- How do you identify?
- What parts of your culture and identity are important to you?
- How have they influenced you?

Setting Boundaries

Healthy boundaries are an essential part of healthy relationships. In your advocacy work, survivors will share intimate details of their lives, sometimes sharing things they’ve never said aloud before. You must set and maintain ethical boundaries in order to navigate this sensitive and personal terrain in a way that is respectful and supportive of those you serve. Tips for setting healthy boundaries:

- Don’t do something for one client that you wouldn’t normally do for others. Although you want to meet survivors where they are and provide individualized services, it’s not okay play favorites.
- Don’t keep secrets. There’s a difference between confidentiality and secrets.
- Don’t engage in dual relationships. You cannot have an outside relationship with a survivor as it will interfere with your ability to be a good advocate.
- Do meet the needs of the client. Advocacy is a support service. It is a one-way relationship that focuses on the client.
- Do reserve the right to say no. It’s okay to say no, as long as you do it respectfully.
- Do discuss questions or concerns about boundaries with your supervisor. This work is complicated, and it’s helpful to get another perspective and some guidance when making difficult decisions.

Finding Support

Since the focus of your work as an advocate is all about meeting the needs of the survivor, it is imperative that you seek support for yourself.

- Professional support: supervisor, supportive coworkers, a mentor at your agency, other people working in the movement. Professional support can help you navigate ethical dilemmas and help you stay connected to the reasons you came to this work in the first place.
- Personal support: family, friends, religious group, support group, counselor or therapist, sports team, book club. Although you cannot discuss your work with your personal support network, you can process your feelings and reconnect to and affirm your other interests.

Self Care

Even though offenders hurt victims 24/7 and there seems not be time to rest, you are still allowed to enjoy your life even though others may be suffering. As we bear witness to suffering, we also need to nurture hope. The individuals who walk through your agency doors have hope for a better life, and it is their greatest strength. *Walk your talk*. Don't neglect your own hope and happiness. Engage in healthy relationships and take care of yourself. General tips for self-care:

- Stay connected to the values of your organization and the movement. Focus on the values that are closest to your heart. It keeps you grounded on the hard days.
- Manage your time well and honor your commitments, including time for yourself outside of work.
- Stay vigilant about your boundaries.
- Maintain a sense of your self-identity outside of work. Do things you enjoy.
- Play responsibly.

See the Resource Guide for information about Compassion Fatigue.

Additional Resources

Safety Planning

When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse, Dr. K.J. Wilson, 1997

The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals that Protect us from Violence, Gavin de Becker, 1998

Safety Net: The National Safe and Strategic Technology Project
www.nnedv.org/projects/safetynet/111.html

Betsy Ramsey Enterprises www.betsyramsey.com

Serving Survivors with Disabilities

SafePlace Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program)

- Manuals & Fact Sheets available to order: www.safeplace.org/

Manuals:

- Stop the Violence, Break the Silence Training Guide & Resource Kit
- Balancing the Power: Creating a Crisis Center Accessible to People with Disabilities
- Beyond Labels: Working with Abuse Survivors with Mental Illness Symptoms or Substance Abuse Issues

Substance Use, Abuse, and Addiction

Getting Safe and Sober: Real Tools You Can Use Manual, Debi S. Edmund, M.A., LPC and Patricia J. Bland, M.A., CDP www.andvsa.org/training/

Real Tools: Responding to Multi-Abuse Trauma – A Tool Kit to Help Advocates and Community Partners Better Serve People with Multiple Issues, Debi S. Edmund, M.A., LPC and Patricia J. Bland, M.A., CDP
www.andvsa.org/training/

Legal Resources

Texas Advocacy Project, www.texasadvocacyproject.org,

Family Violence Legal Line 800-374-HOPE

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (in 68 counties), www.trla.org/about/service-area/

Battered Women's Justice Project, www.bwjp.org

Womenslaw.org, www.womenslaw.org

Legal Momentum, www.legalmomentum.org

Economic Justice Resources

National Network to End Domestic Violence Economic Justice Curriculum,
www.nnedv.org/resources/ejresources/ejcurriculum.html

Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Trauma, and Burnout

Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, www.compassionfatigue.org

Social Worker Burnout Studied: Organizational Prevention of Vicarious Trauma, Holly Bell, Shanti Kulkarni, Lisa Dalton, 2003, available online through Arte Sana, at www.artesana.com/articles/social_worker_burnout.htm



The Texas Council on Family Violence promotes safe and healthy relationships by supporting service providers, facilitating strategic prevention efforts, and creating opportunities for freedom from domestic violence.

This project was supported by funding from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this program are those of TCFV and do not necessarily reflect the views of the above agency.