



Policy Committee Meeting  
March 19, 2024

Judge Judy Warne	Committee Chair
Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Lt. John Klafka	HCSO
Amanda Oder	Texas Advocacy Project
Katharina Dechert	Tahirih
Lt. Kira Webster	HPD
Sonia Corrales	HAWC
Rebecca Council	HCDVCC
Shannon Fowler	UH Downtown
Celina Lilly	Fresh Spirit

Judge Judy Warne welcomed and saved her report for last.

Lt. John Klafka stated the HCSO command has recognized the need to increase the staffing for the Sex Crimes Unit. They are hoping to staff up from 5 Detectives to 10. They are also in talks to add a Forensic Interviewer and a Victim Advocate to assist in the Child Abuse Cases. There have also been discussions around moving Human Trafficking under his command which would add 4 officers and a Sargent. The committee then discussed issues with forensic interviewers vs trauma informed investigators interviewing victims. The discussion then moved on to what the D.A. requires to file Sexual Assault charges. Texas FNE which conducts most of the forensic interviews in the County has about a 3 to 4 month wait for an interview. This discussion will continue at a future Harris County SART meeting. The SART report can be found here: <https://hawc.org/2023-sart-report/>

Lt. Kira Webster discussed issues with filing domestic violence charges when a sexual assault case is also pending. Amanda Oder announced that TAP does not have a waiting list so a victim can talk to a lawyer about their rights and get resources while they wait for their case to be investigated. Lt. Webster asked Judge Warne about the status of the PO forms. Judge Warne stated they are still in the process of being corrected and are not out yet. Lt. Webster asked if the Law Enforcement sheet could be modified to include more information to identify the respondent so they can get them in the system correctly and in the time specified in HB 660. Judge Warne said the mudslide that is POs is depressing because it is hard to get Judges to understand the urgency of getting POs heard.

Shannon Fowler asked Judge Warne to clarify some questions for the survey he is creating for survivors. Judge Warne said the survey by the Texas Center for the Judiciary is set to go out in April and the questions

will be around How has the change in the burden in PO's 1. Impacted their docket and two. Impacted how they grant PO's. Are they applying a new standard. The purpose is to see how the change in the burden has changed the Judges and their perspectives on POs.

Katharina Dechert mentioned that the Supreme Court ruled that SB 4 can go into effect until the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit decides the case (Hours later the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit delayed it going into effect and scheduled a hearing on it for March 20<sup>th</sup>). This is unfolding. Stay tuned to the news for any decisions.

Celina Lilly discussed a case Fresh Spirit is dealing with and then mentioned they have gift cards they are giving out to help their clients for flexible funding.

Amanda Oder mentioned TAP has a new managing attorney and several job openings.

Sonia Corrales talked about the Public Policy Committee for the Texas Council on Family Violence's Survey. They results are in, but they are still sorting out them out and will keep us updated on the feedback.

Judge Warne announced she is on the Center for the Texas Judiciary's training committee. There are about 12 topics Judges must be trained on and all have different timelines to be completed. They are creating webinars for all the Judges in Texas. Family Violence is one of those topics and Amanda Oder will be filming a webinar for them. The family violence training must be completed by December 2025. They are hoping to have everything filmed and scheduled by Fall.

Judge Warne thanked everyone for the robust discussion that was had today.

Meeting Adjourned.

Our next meeting is on April 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 via ZOOM.