



Legal Services Committee
March 20, 2025

Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Rebecca Councill	HCDVCC
Norquinta Goodall	HPD- Victim Services
Calvin Ford	Bay Area Turning Point
Alejandra Alvarado	HCDVCC
Amanda Elkanick	Texas Advocacy Project
Jacklyn Guerra	HAWC
Jessica Howton-Stool	Houston Volunteer Lawyers
Meagen Belovsky	South Texas College of Law

Amy Smith opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.

Meagen Belovsky gave an update on the Pro- Se Video Project with the 280th District Court. She has meet with Judge Curvey and they are working out the best way to get the information about common objections, how to get in evidence like text messages and phone calls, and hearsay from children. They are hoping to complete the project with her current students by the end of this semester.

Jacklyn Guerra announced HAWC's Believe Luncheon is in April. The new shelter is scheduled to open hopefully in mid-April, but they will have tours at the beginning of April for Partners and Elected Officials before clients move in.

Norquinta Goodall introduced herself as the HPD Victim Services Liaison for the Southwest side of Houston. HPD is experiencing an influx of cases with a surge in cases involving seniors and domestic violence. Her contact information is: Norquinta Goodall HPD Victim Service Division 13097 Nitida St, Houston, Tx 77045 Direct number 832-394-0416 Norquinta.Goodall@Houstonpolice.org

Alejandra Alvarado said there have been several agencies that have reached out to her about their High-Risk clients. She asked if there are still agencies providing Know Your Rights sessions. A few agencies were mentioned.

The Archdiocese of Houston and Galveston:
<https://www.archgh.org/know-your-rights>

Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project

<https://ghirp.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Galveston-KYR-Sessions-2025.pdf>

Jessica Howton-Stool announced that Houston Volunteer Lawyers has moved and are still not taking walk-ins. They have started 2 new projects 1. Eviction help in the JP courts. They are piloting in one court. 2. Extended help for people with Family Law Cases. For those who go to the Law Library and are struggling they can get Pro-Bono help not full representation with drafting orders, etc. This project kicks off next month and hopefully if this model works, they can expand it. HVL is also working with a few agencies on Family Preparedness presentations for Immigrant families.

Amanda Elkanick announced TAP has been working behind the scenes on their processes and how they can improve them in meeting the needs of survivors. They are launching a new on-line application, hopefully next week. Their goal is to streamline their applications by adding and subtracting questions including asking for permission to text and email. This will allow the Intake Screeners to contact the survivor to make sure they have everything they need before their appointment. They are also restructuring their organization to include more assistance with Pro-Se cases and Pro-Bono representation. They are hoping to be able to take on more direct representation cases.

Amy Smith announced HCDVCC will be hosting Understanding the Intersection of Brain Injury and Intimate Partner Violence: Strategies for Improving Brain Health with Dr. Eve Valera on April 29th from 9:00 to Noon. More information can be found here:

<https://www.hcdvcc.org/event/understanding-the-intersection-of-brain-injury-and-intimate-partner-violence-strategies-for-improving-brain-health/>

Amanda also mentioned TAP is watching a few bills

HB 36- Requiring certain High-Risk Offenders “shall” be ordered to wear a GPS monitor and to create an infrastructure that is pro-active instead of reactive, meaning tracking will be in real time as will notifications to victims and law enforcement can respond immediately to arrest the offender for violating the restriction zones.

HB 799- Bail reform bill about non-violent first-time offenders. At the committee hearing after so many victims testified the committee is considering changes to the bill to include family violence offenders Both bills were heard in the same committee and Rep. Gene Wu stated victim services is underfunded in Texas and it needs to be a priority in funding in Texas especially with the Federal cuts. Also, the Committee talked about expanding victim services in DPS and data tracking. A fiscal note will be attached to the bill, but the amount is not known at this time.

Jessica asked about a speaker for a training of Pro-Bono lawyers who is a dynamic speaker on explaining poverty and working with marginalized communities.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting Thursday April 17th at 11:30 via ZOOM.