



Legal Services Committee  
January 15, 2026

Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Thecia Jenkins	HCDVCC
Rebecca Council	HCDVCC
Alejandra Alvarado	HCDVCC
Alexia Rauen	Advocates for Immigrant Survivors
Libby Hasse	Tahirih
Meagan Belovsky	South Texas College of Law
Magdalena Perez	Endeavors
Lt. John Klafka	HCSO
Crystal Franklin	BATP
Amanda Elkanik	Texas Advocacy Project
Luz Lopez	Commissioner PCT 2' Office

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

Crystal Franklin announced Bay Area Turning Point received their HUD funding and has an open position for this funding:

<https://bayareaturningpointinc.applytojob.com/apply/L6ZuePmMPe/Compliance-Specialist-CoC-ESG-HUD-Grants?source=Our%20Career%20Page%20Widget>

Everything else is status quo.

Lt. John Klafka reported they are still waiting for a new Captain.

Libby Hasse reported that Tahirih is dealing with non-stop asylum cases and interviews. They continue to work on old U visa and VAWA cases as well. They have seen movement on the U Visa cases- they had a case from May 2017 recently granted. (There are only 10,000 U Visas available each year for the entire country). They are telling their clients it could take up to 10 years to get their cases heard. The case backlog on asylum cases is being addressed by taking some old cases from the backlog but also taking cases that have been recently filed. It seems it is taking about 1 to 2 years before these cases get a hearing. Tahirih takes about 2 new intakes a week. The intake folks usually get back to someone in about a week. Most intakes end up with survivors just needing advice. Amy asked if people can still get detained when their cases are pending and their answer is yes, and criminal activity is not the only

reason someone could get detained. Bystanders have been picked up as well. Luz Lopez asked how the recent activities in Venezuela have changed what is happening locally. Both Libby and Alexia said it is too soon to see if things are changing but people from Venezuela have been deported back to their home country or to other countries.

Alexia Rauen noted that Advocates for Immigrant Survivors received their federal funding, but they are focusing on non IVP Sexual Assault cases to satisfy the parameters on their grant. They are still getting trafficking referrals, and it seems ICE is now participating in some of those raids. They have had a few people detained by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It also seems there is a higher risk for folks in the counties surrounding Harris County.

Meagan Belovksy announced South Texas College of Law has started their new semester. Their OAG grant was denied again so now they are looking for private funding. The video for the 280<sup>th</sup> District Court is still a work in progress. STCL will be participating in the Houston Bar Association's Day of Service in March. Alejandra asked about their referral process and Meagan said they get about 20 new intakes every few weeks and could go to a couple of different family law attorneys depending on the circumstances of the case. She and her clinic get most of the cases involving DV. HCDVCC also has a training on Protective orders in the 280<sup>th</sup>: <https://hcdvcc-academy.teachable.com/p/legal-services-training>

Amanda Elkanik announced Thomas Velz is leaving for a new chapter and they are excited for him but sorry to see him go. She also mentioned that TAP is doing a big push and prioritizing P.O. cases. You can also announced TAP has several videos online that can be helpful to advocates and survivors:

<https://urldefense.com/v3/> [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL576VEbsgRpokGOWFergnc9ImPLE6zsj9\\_!!OAqB8m26hw!or\\_hkdWhDDMtADEwwSOGfpi06ZvNko30aZsQf4X9KKc0Bwb4arkHBclAnTHs2flyNOX-3vxoTqijZNP4NL\\_WvPb-tCOxvVuZfXEQ7vNDqYRfXAXJ\\$](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL576VEbsgRpokGOWFergnc9ImPLE6zsj9_!!OAqB8m26hw!or_hkdWhDDMtADEwwSOGfpi06ZvNko30aZsQf4X9KKc0Bwb4arkHBclAnTHs2flyNOX-3vxoTqijZNP4NL_WvPb-tCOxvVuZfXEQ7vNDqYRfXAXJ$)

She also stated they have completed online training for Judges to satisfy the 1 hour requirement for DV training:

<https://texas-advocacy-project.teachable.com/l/products?sortKey=name&sortDirection=asc&page=1>

She also stated they have some upcoming webinars as well:

<https://www.texasadvocacyproject.org/upcoming-webinars>

Alejandra asked about how to make referrals to TAP and Amanda said they have revamped their intake process:

[https://tapoi.legalserver.org/modules/matter/extern\\_intake.php?pid=163&h=62b5ab&state\\_uid=342f237e-f239-11f0-b680-0eea33fe5494&f=405&d\\_id=2](https://tapoi.legalserver.org/modules/matter/extern_intake.php?pid=163&h=62b5ab&state_uid=342f237e-f239-11f0-b680-0eea33fe5494&f=405&d_id=2)

People should hear back from someone within 1 business day but the number contacting them will be a 512-area code since they are based in Austin.

TAP is working to update the Protective Order Report they did several years ago. Some highlights they have found is that there is a high turnover rate in D.A. and County Attorneys Offices that handle P.O.'s and that a education is needed on crime victims' rights.

TAP will be looking at the landscape in Texas about the 2<sup>nd</sup> prong of the P.O.'s that was taking out a couple of sessions ago. The requirement that family violence is likely to occur in the future. Some people are advocating to get it put back in so TAP will be gathering data and having conversations to get the lay of the land on this issue.

And finally, TAP has a few open positions:

<https://www.texasadvocacyproject.org/about-project/open-positions>

Luz Lopez from Commissioner Garcia's office joined the committee looking for resources for her community. They have been hearing that people are keeping their kids out of school because of the fear of ICE and several have self-deported so they could go back to their own countries without fear of being deported somewhere else.

Magdalena Perez from Endeavors also joined the committee looking for resources. Her agency works with 12 counties including Harris and the surrounding counties.

Thecia Jenkins announced HCDVCC in partnership with Tahirih is hosting an Enhanced Safety Planning training. It is currently full with a waiting list but we are hoping to set up another training for those who could not get in the one.

Amy announced the next meeting will be on Thursday February 19th, 2026, at 11:30 via ZOOM. She will send out a new link for this year's meetings.

Meeting adjourned.