



Legal Services Committee
February 19, 2026

Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Thecia Jenkins	HCDVCC
Nidia Cantu	HCDVCC
Sarah Bryan	Advocates for Immigrant Survivors
Lt. Matthew Murphy	HCSO
Jacklyn Guerra	HAWC
Jessica Howton	Houston Volunteer Lawyers

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

Jessica Howton from Houston Volunteer Lawyers announced they are still doing Family Preparedness Clinics for those who request it. They are supporting the Houston Bar Association's Day of Service on March 28th. Nidia Cantu also chimed in about the Day of Service. Topics will include a Pro Se Protective Order Guide and Tik Tok videos to help explain it, Family Law Issues, Immigration Issues, and Landlord/Tenant Rights.

Nidia Cantu reported the Domestic Violence High Risk Team is seeing a decrease in cases being reported but an increase in referrals to the Team. They are working with clients and other agencies on safety issues around getting to and from Court.

Sarah Bryan noted that Advocates for Immigrant Survivors are starting their federal funding, which will be focusing on non IVP Sexual Assault. They will still be working with IPV survivors. They will be hiring a Legal Advocate soon. They have seen a decrease in reporting as well but are still processing asylum claims and U and T Visas which are slowly moving through the system.

Jacklyn Guerra announced HAWC is seeing an increase in clients and has been extremely busy. They have recently aligned their policies and procedures to make referrals to the Domestic Violence High Risk Team. They are hiring a Bi-lingual Legal Advocate. She also announced HAWC has a new CEO- Susan Bailey Newell and they are currently going through a restructuring process and realigning departments.

Thecia Jenkins announced that because of this Committee, HCDVCC, in partnership with Tahirih hosted Enhanced Safety Planning training, which was such a success we had to add an additional session. She is currently working with Harris County Public Health Department doing a 6-month training with the RISE

and HART Staff members. HCDVCC is hosting the 2nd Annual Brain Health Summit on April 22nd at Rice University, details coming soon.

Lt. Matthew Murphy announced the Sheriff Office has a couple of things pending and will report back once it all comes together.

Amy Smith announced that the Adult Violent Death Review Team's recommendations discovered how many people are flying under the radar by living in domestic violence relationships and not reaching out for services. Children are either witnessing the Homicides, discovering the body or were present at the time of the homicide so a lot of recommendations were around schools and having a safe person or a safe space to disclose for them. Also, Victim Services at Police Agencies need to focus on reaching out to victims especially when charges are not filed or there are repeated calls for service. Nidia mentioned using social media as a platform to reach out, especially to the younger generation, as intervention and prevention tools.

The March meeting falls during Spring Break so those present decided to skip next month and reconvene in April

Amy announced the next meeting will be on Thursday April 16th, 2026, at 11:30 via ZOOM.

Meeting adjourned.