



Policy Committee Meeting  
February 17, 2026

Judge Judy Warne	Chair
Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Lt. John Klafka	HCSO
Samantha Lehman	Intern Pct 5 Victim Services
Amanda Elkanick Oder	Texas Advocacy Project
Aarian Tipton	Texas Advocacy Project
Lt. Kira Webster	HPD- Family Violence
Katharina Dechert	Tahirih
Sara Lewis	HPD- Victim Services
Sonia Corrales	HAWC
Thecia Jenkins	HCDVCC
Swati Narayan	DAYA
Nusrat Ameen	DAYA
Shannon Fowler	UH Downtown

Judge Warne welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

Amy Smith thanked Katharina Dechert for her training on Enhanced Safety Planning and speaking at HCDVCC's Community Meeting. Amy also talked about HR 2189 that passed the House and is pending in the Senate to allow abusers who cannot possess firearms to be able to buy tasers. Also, the SAVE Act has passed the House and is pending in the Senate that could affect voting if someone has changed their name. Katharina mentioned that things are getting fast tracked through the House but seem to be slowing down when it gets to the Senate.

Lt. John Klafka announced a new Deputy that will be doing Gun Surrender, U-Visas and CPS/APS reporting will be starting on Sunday. Det. Oscar Cisneros has moved to investigating Sexual Assaults

Amanda Elkanick Oder reported that Early Voting has started with important races for Senator and Attorney General on the ballot. She also stated over 60 Judges have already viewed their training on Domestic Violence. The TCFV Public Policy Committee met last week and had over 100 suggestions for the next Legislative Session. They will be narrowing those down to about 5

priorities. It was brought up that there have been some issues with Pro Se applicants in Protective Orders who have had problems submitting the TCIC forms that go with their PO paperwork. TAP will be reaching out to people before they head to DC to meet the Texas Delegation.

Katharina Dechert announced Tahirih has been working with the Alliance for Immigrants on some issues that can be found in the links below:

<https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/take-action>

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b9f1d48da02bc44473c36f1/t/698d2a4402641d0ba186ed22/1770859076430/AIS-DHS-Funding-Policy-Priorities\\_Feb26.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b9f1d48da02bc44473c36f1/t/698d2a4402641d0ba186ed22/1770859076430/AIS-DHS-Funding-Policy-Priorities_Feb26.pdf)

Sonia Corrales announced Susan Bailey Newell started as the new CEO of the Houston Area Women's Center on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Nusrat Ameen talked about issues Daya's clients are having with SNAP and Medicaid. Katharina discussed the difference between the Public Charge which applies when someone is applying for these benefits. There will be regulatory changes, but they have been slowed down by the DHS shutdown. The Public Charge is different than the provisions in the Big Beautiful Bill that was passed last year. In that bill people with pending or approved VAWA standing are not eligible to receive Public Benefits- SNAP went into effect in July and when people come up for renewal they are being denied. The Medicaid change goes into effect in October. U.S. born children might still qualify for some of those benefits. Protecting Immigrant Families is a good resource for more information.

The next meeting is scheduled during Spring Break, so it was decided to cancel the meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

**Next Meeting April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026, via ZOOM**