

# Austin/Travis County Interagency Sexual Assault Team

## ***What is ISAT and who is involved?***

The Austin/Travis County Interagency Sexual Assault Team (ISAT) is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency team created in September 2017 to address a need for coordination amongst law enforcement, forensic technicians and labs, and victim advocate representatives to enhance our systemic effectiveness with regard to response, investigation and prosecution of adult sexual assaults and to ensure that victim needs are being met in our ever-growing community. ISAT was created based on best practices as recommended by several organizations<sup>1</sup>. Entities participating in ISAT include:

Austin Police Department  
APD Forensic Science Division  
Cedar Park Police Department  
Lakeway Police Department  
Manor Police Department  
Mustang Ridge Police Department  
Pflugerville Police Department  
Texas DPS Capital Area DNA Lab  
The SAFE Alliance  
Travis County Adult Probation  
Travis County District Attorney's Office  
Travis County Sheriff's Office  
UT at Austin Police Department  
Village of Briarcliff Police Department

ISAT Team meetings serve as an opportunity for systemic responders to meet, discuss, and review cases/investigations and more effectively address all the systemic needs and ways to enhance our work. The core members of this multi-disciplinary team include local law enforcement (sworn and victim counselors), the DA's Office (prosecutors and victim counselors), the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the community advocacy group who provides our local forensic exams/SANEs (The SAFE Alliance). The Executive Committee (which includes the leaders of all the core members) met in September and October of 2017 and adopted a MOU. They provide strategic direction to the ISAT Team, which includes but is not limited to understanding/assessing current practices and protocols as it relates to our agencies' response to adult sexual assault, identifying trauma-informed/victim-centered best practices, identifying interdisciplinary training needs, collecting data, training and debriefing recent adult sexual assault jury trials.

<sup>1</sup> For more information:

[https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc\\_archives/sartkit/develop/build-sart.html](https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/sartkit/develop/build-sart.html);  
[http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications\\_NSVRC\\_Guide\\_SART-Development.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Guide_SART-Development.pdf) ; <http://www.nccasa.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ERS-CCR-SART-Toolkit.pdf> ;

## ***What is ISAT working on?***

The ISAT Team began monthly meetings in November 2017 and has launched several projects including:

- Case File Review
- Data Work Group
- Training Committee
- Victim Feedback
- Gift of Hope Initiative  
(See next page for details and updates on projects.)

## ***What have we learned?***

The data project focused on the status of the adult sexual assaults reported to police in 2017. Preliminary key findings include:

### **Phase 1: Law Enforcement Status of Cases:**

- 625 adult sexual assaults reported to Travis County law enforcement agencies in 2017
- 241 cases (38.6%) did not proceed due to victims not wanting to proceed in the investigation<sup>2</sup>
- 113 cases (18.1%) were declined for prosecution
- 96 cases (15.3%) were suspended (pending additional leads or testing results) with 22 of those cases having no suspect identified
- 79 (12.6%) cases referred for sexual assault prosecution
- 11 cases referred for prosecution on charges other than sexual assault (10 of the 11 were for family violence-related offenses)

### **Phase 2: Prosecution Status of Cases:**

- 68 of the 79 cases referred for sexual assault prosecution have been indicted (with 11 cases still pending indictment)
- 34 of the 79 cases were disposed as of 01-01-19:
  - 1 case No Billed (Williamson County)
  - 13 cases dismissed (10 due to victim participation issues)
  - 20 pled or found guilty:
    - 4 cases convicted by a jury
    - 16 cases resulted in a plea of guilty (7 with victim participation issues; pled to family violence-related charges)
    - 14 felony offenses with 7 sexual assault charges (8 sentenced to TDC with 2 cases having victim participation issues)

<sup>2</sup> Victim either expressed that they did not want to proceed or would not return calls, emails or other contact attempts or were not located.

2018 Projects/Initiatives of ISAT:		
Project:	Goals:	Update/Highlights:
Case File Review:	Conduct an in-depth study of adult sexual assault cases from reporting to case disposition in order to identify: effectiveness of current processes/protocols; gaps and successes; victim centeredness of our processes and recommendations for enhancing our systemic responses and interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identified process/guide to follow<sup>3</sup></li> <li>✓ Sought technical assistance for project<sup>4</sup></li> <li>✓ Participated in several webinars on case file review process</li> <li>✓ Discussed issues related to confidentiality, privilege, and privacy</li> <li>• Began mapping existing local response systems and processes</li> </ul>
Data Work Group:	<i>Where do cases fall off and why? How do we define and measure success?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Phase 1: Identified status of all adult sexual assaults reported to police in 2017</li> <li>✓ Phase 2: Identified current status of all 2017 reported sexual assaults referred for prosecution</li> <li>• Phase 3: Identifying reasons for prosecution declined cases</li> <li>• Phase 4: Identifying technical assistance opportunity for defining/measuring success</li> </ul>
Victim Feedback:	Identify best practices for victim feedback and make recommendations for next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Completed a literature review on best practices</li> <li>✓ Issued recommendations to Executive Committee</li> <li>• Creating a working partnership with APD SAKI Grant project for next steps</li> <li>• Identifying technical assistance opportunities for next steps</li> </ul>
Training Committee:	Create a variety of training modalities for criminal justice partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Held three trainings to date: <i>Neurobiology of Trauma; Mythbusters—Sexual Assault Edition</i> (more than 100 persons participating)</li> <li>• One scheduled for Feb.</li> </ul>
Gift of Hope Initiative:	Create opportunities of supporting survivors of sexual assaults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collected 60 kits of basic needs supplies that were distributed to local police departments during Sexual Assault Awareness Month April 2018</li> </ul>

**For more information on Austin/Travis County Interagency Sexual Assault:**

Beverly Mathews, Director of SVU  
 Travis County District Attorney's Office  
[Beverly.mathews@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:Beverly.mathews@traviscountytx.gov)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mncasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Case-File-Review-Guidebook.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Sexual Violence Justice Institute: <https://www.mncasa.org/sexual-violence-justice-institute/casereview/>