

VICTIM SERVICES QUARTERLY

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This e-newsletter is published by the Texas Attorney General's Office.

You can contact the Attorney General's Crime Victim Services Division by calling us at 1-800-983-9933, or contact us by e-mail at crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

Dear Advocates:

Welcome to the first edition of the Crime Victim Services Division e-newsletter. In this quarterly publication, we offer information about our services and ask for news of what is working in your community. Please view this venture as an opportunity to exchange ideas with your colleagues on improving victim assistance in Texas.

I would also like to remind you of our annual Crime Victim Services Conference, being held November 7-9, 2005 in Austin. The theme for this year's conference is "Pathways to Excellence." Conference workshops will focus on establishing solid foundation skills while highlighting exemplary programs. We look forward to seeing you there. With your involvement, we can provide the best possible services for Texas crime victims.

Sincerely,

Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

TEXAS CRIME VICTIMS' COMPENSATION PROGRAM

In 1979, the 66th Legislature passed the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Act (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 56, Subchapter B). The intent was to encourage greater public cooperation with the criminal justice process by compensating innocent victims of violent crime who incur monetary losses. This law, together with rules promulgated by the Attorney General (Texas Administrative Code, Title 1, Part III, Chapter 61), provides the authority, requirements and limits for the payment of crime-related expenses. The Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) program assists eligible applicants by reimbursing costs incurred as a result of violent crime, including medical services, mental health counseling, funeral expenses and lost earnings. The program is designated by statute as the "payer of last resort," and collateral sources such as medical insurance must first be utilized.

The first awards were made by the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation program in 1980. Through the middle of March 2005, over \$670

million in payments have been made on behalf of victims. In Fiscal Year 2004, the program received 38,812 applications, processed over 91,000 bills from victims, mailed out over 61,000 payments, and paid \$72.8 million in benefits to ease the financial burden faced by victims in the aftermath of crime.

The CVC program's 2004 annual report is available on the Attorney General's website at www.oag.state.tx.us. Also available on the website are English and Spanish versions of the compensation application, brochures and travel/rent/relocation forms. The Crime Victims' Compensation Quick Reference Chart may also be downloaded from the website. This helpful tool provides basic information on the benefits available from the program, including monetary limits, eligibility restrictions and documentation requirements. If you have questions regarding forms, brochures or the CVC program, please contact us at crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us.

Advocates, law enforcement agencies, district and county attorney's offices, medical personnel and other providers who serve victims of crime in Texas are eligible for limited access to the CVC claims management system. After completing an application process to

A MOTHER OF FOUR WALKS INTO
THE CALDWELL COUNTY DISTRICT
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TO REPORT
THAT HER HUSBAND ASSAULTED
TWO OF HER DAUGHTERS.
SHE LEAVES WITH A PROTECTIVE
ORDER, A CRIME VICTIMS'
COMPENSATION APPLICATION,
COUNSELING REFERRALS
FOR HER CHILDREN, AND
A SAFER TOMORROW.

- CVC 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

ensure proper security for sensitive victim information, remote users can access the CVC mainframe computer via the Internet and view basic claim and billing information. Many large volume users stay logged on all day, eliminating the need to make phone calls to check claims status. There is no limit to the number of claims a user may access. To submit an application for a remote access account or to get additional information, please contact us at CVCRemoteusers@oag.state.tx.us or call 512-936-1768.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINERS & RESPONSE TEAM

While serving on the Nacogdoches County Grand Jury, Glen Robinson noticed a striking pattern about the sexual assault cases he reviewed. In each case, the victim had to be transported to another county to receive a sexual assault exam. He thought about the additional trauma this caused survivors.

After his service, Robinson returned to his job as a local hospital administrator and contacted the Nacogdoches County District Attorney, Stephanie Stephens. They agreed that the investigation and prosecution of sex crimes would improve if sexual assault exams were available in their own community. They began the process of creating a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program by working with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to establish a Sexual Assault Response Team, or SART. Four key partners are involved in the process: the prosecutor's office, local law enforcement agencies, the medical facility and the local sexual assault program. The Nacogdoches

network includes Stephen F. Austin State University, three local law enforcement agencies, the Nacogdoches District Attorney and the East Texas Women's Shelter. The network will hold its first SANE training in May 2005.

SANEs are registered nurses who have received extensive training in collecting medical/forensic evidence from sexual assault survivors. SANEs are certified by the OAG after completing a sixty-four (64) hour didactic course and acquiring ninety-six (96) hours of clinical experience. With 24-hour availability, SANEs respond promptly and offer comprehensive, compassionate care to sexual assault survivors. They may be called as expert witnesses. The OAG trained 95 SANEs last fiscal year. As of March 1, 2005, 65 SANEs had been trained in this fiscal year. There are 215 SANEs currently certified by the OAG.



“SANE specialists are our first responders for survivors of sexual assault,” said Attorney General Greg Abbott. “By enabling more people to provide this comprehensive exam in a compassionate environment, we are helping Texans at some of their toughest times.” The Sexual Assault Prevention & Crisis Services Program of the Crime Victim Services Division provides technical assistance and SANE training using a collaborative, community approach. For more information about SART/SANE programs, please contact us at crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us.

GRANTS & CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT

As authorized by the Texas Legislature, the Office of Attorney General provides crime victim assistance through grants and contracts to local and statewide victim assistance programs. Crisis intervention, victim hotlines, emergency shelters, accompaniment during sexual assault exams, counseling and advocacy through court proceedings are examples of the victim-related services made possible by these partnerships.

The Grants and Contracts Management Program of the Crime Victim Services Division administered \$33.7 million in funding for local and statewide victim assistance programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2004. This funding supported 1,335 staff positions and served 180,343 victims. The program contracts with Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation (civil legal services), and Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA).

The Grants and Contracts program directly administers the following grants:

Victim Coordinator/Liaison Grants, authorized in 1999, support statutorily-required victim coordinator and victim liaison positions in local law enforcement agencies and prosecutor's offices. These personnel serve as advocates by

providing information and referrals throughout the criminal justice process. In FY 2004, the OAG awarded 71 such grants, enabling law enforcement and prosecutors to assist nearly 24,000 victims of crime.

Other Victim Assistance Grants (OVAG), formerly called Victim Assistance Discretionary Grants, help non-profit agencies and local units of government address the unmet needs of victims of violent crime. OVAG primarily supports direct victim services, training, counseling, public awareness and emergency assistance. The 205 OVAG awards in FY 2004 provided nearly 60,000 victims with the support of knowledgeable and compassionate advocates.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services (SAPCS) grants have been administered by the Office of the Attorney General since 1996. These grants are a combination of state and federal funds that support sexual assault prevention, education and direct services. Specifically, SAPCS contracts are awarded to local programs that address the problem of sexual assault through crisis intervention, 24-hour hotlines, medical/legal/law enforcement accompaniment, public

THE GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OF THE
CRIME VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION
ADMINISTERED \$33.7 MILLION
IN FUNDING FOR LOCAL AND
STATEWIDE VICTIM ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMS IN FISCAL YEAR 2004.

education, and professional and volunteer training. In FY 2004, the OAG awarded contracts to 76 local sexual assault programs that provide services in 225 counties and to TAASA to strengthen the comprehensive network of services for victims of sexual assault throughout the state.

The program also awards and administers grants for Texas VINE, the statewide automated victim notification system. See *Texas VINE article on page 5*.

Please check the Grants and Contracts Management Program website at <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/funding.shtml> for updates and funding announcements. Contact the program staff with your questions by emailing crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us.

TEXAS VINE: VICTIM INFORMATION & NOTIFICATION EVERYDAY

In Houston, the mother of a homicide victim tracks the trial dates of her daughter's accused killer. In Lubbock, a granddaughter checks the bond status of the suspect who victimized her grandfather. In Mission, a pregnant woman requests jail release notification for the two individuals charged with her assault. The Texas Victim Information and Notification Everyday system – Texas VINE – helps make this possible by giving crime victims 24-hour access to county jail and court information.

Texas VINE provides victims and concerned members of the community with up-to-date information about offenders' county jail custody and/or court status, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Information is transferred from participating county databases to the national VINE Communications Center every fifteen minutes. Users register with the Texas VINE service by calling 1-877-TX4-VINE/1-877-894-8463 or by logging on to www.VINElink.com. Registered users are then contacted automatically by phone or email if there is a change in status. Users may also check on status at any time by phone or by linking with the website. Trained operators are available at all times.

The right to be notified of court proceedings upon request is a basic right afforded victims by the Texas Constitution. The Texas Legislature allocated

resources to the Office of the Attorney General to facilitate the implementation of a statewide automated victim notification system. In response, the OAG certified Appriss, Inc., a Kentucky-based technology company to work directly with the Texas counties who are responsible for implementing and maintaining their own Texas VINE programs. Nineteen other states have a similar system, including New York, Illinois and Florida.

As of March 2005, 140 Texas counties are participating in Texas VINE. These counties include 96% of the state's population and 92% of the reported Texas violent crime rate. Of these counties, 123 have jail status online and 95 have court status information available. In the first six months of FY 2005, Texas VINE received 588,908 calls, made 37,169 updates for jail/court status notifications, and registered 37,169 new users.

Currently, Texas VINE only covers offenders in county jail custody. The Victim Services Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice provides information to crime victims on the status of state prison inmates via the TDCJ toll free number: 1-800-848-4284.



“Crime victims have the right to be involved in the process and have access to information about their cases,” Attorney General Greg Abbott said at the Harris County Texas VINE launch. “Texas VINE gives crime victims another way to stay involved in the judicial process.” Hays County Sheriff's Sgt. Julie Villalpando said about Texas VINE, “I think it is a wonderful tool... it will give victims peace of mind.”

It should be noted that Texas VINE is meant to be used as a notification tool and not as a guarantee. Crime victims should always contact local law enforcement authorities and local victim advocates for emergency assistance and safety plans.

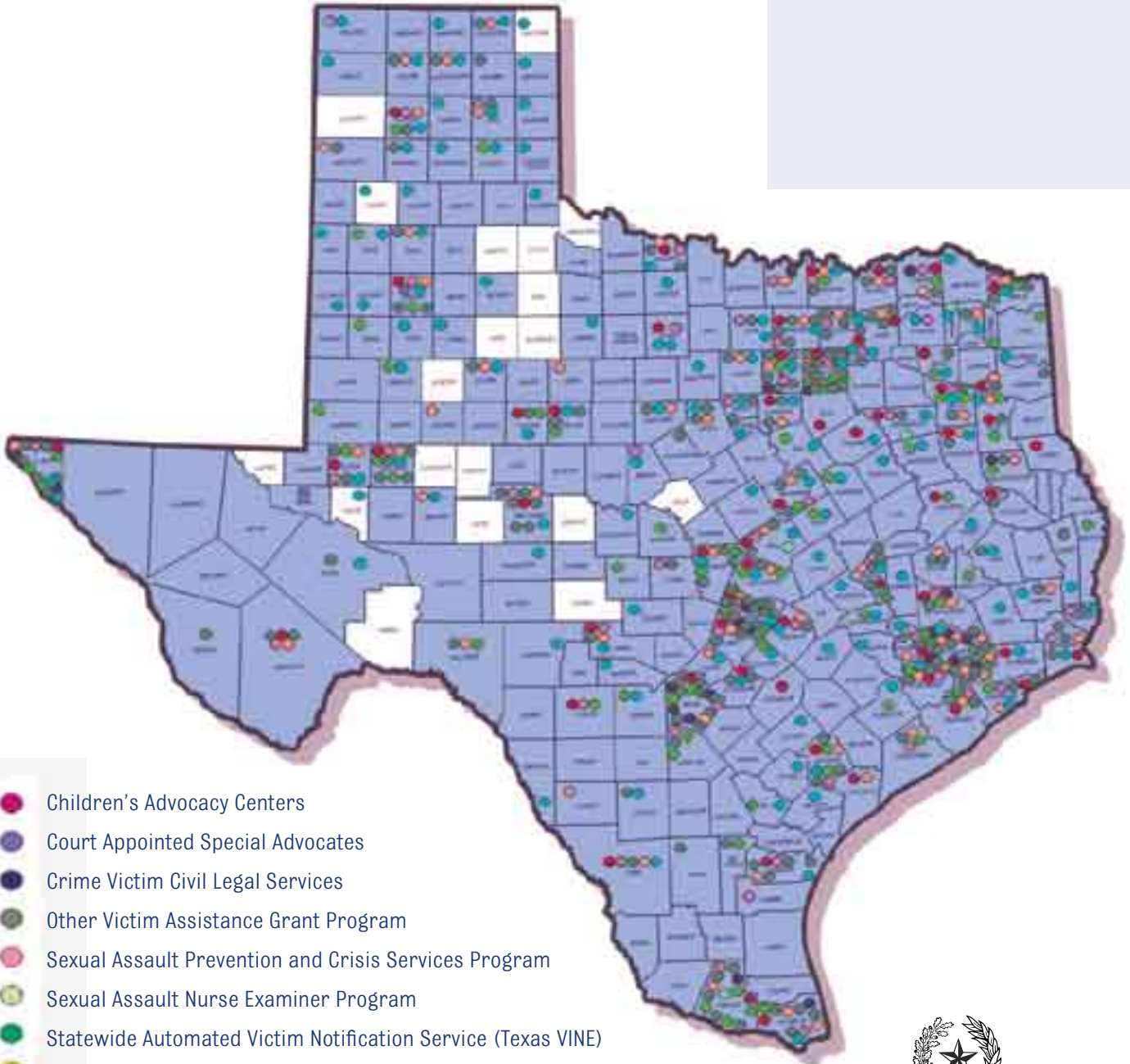
For more information about Texas VINE, please go to our website www.oag.state.tx.us.

MAP DOES NOT INCLUDE 15

GRANTS TO PROGRAMS THAT

PROVIDE SERVICES STATEWIDE.

CRIME VICTIM SERVICES: GRANTS BY COUNTY



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 2005

6	7	8	9	10	11	12
sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday

Mark Your Calendar for the 2005 Texas Crime Victim Services Conference!

The 2005 Texas Crime Victim Services Conference will be held November 7-9, 2005 at the Renaissance Austin Hotel, 9721 Arboretum Boulevard, Austin, Texas 78759. Please call the hotel directly at 512-343-2626 to make your reservations. Call no later than October 15, 2005 to receive the special rate of \$80 single and \$120 double occupancy. Registration materials and conference agenda will be available online in May, 2005. Visit our website at www.oag.state.tx.us and select the "Conferences" link.