
FORT BEND COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM
2025 BIENNIAL REPORT

The Fort Bend County SART Team

To contact the SART Team, please email Nicole.Defee@fortbendcountytexas.gov

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| SART Overview | 5 |
| Mission | 5 |
| Values | 6 |
| Outline of Activities and Trainings | 9 |
| Data and Findings..... | 11 |
| Conclusion..... | 17 |

Executive Summary

The Fort Bend County Sexual Assault Response Team (hereafter referred to as “SART” or “Team”) collaborates to improve the county-wide response to sexual assaults. This report concentrates on the improved protocols and continuing innovations undertaken by the SART. Over the past year, the Team has focused on improving the SART meetings and member attendance, along with focused training in certain areas. Those areas include educating members on non-traditional investigative techniques and methods to increase successful prosecutions, as well as other crimes that Adult Survivors may be experiencing, such as Trafficking-related crimes.

It is generally accepted that the number of sexual assaults that occur far outweigh the number actually reported and prosecuted (Texas Statewide Sexual Assault Prevalence Study, August 2015). Vertical prosecution is an effective means in assisting law enforcement to act quickly when survivors do make a report, to increase survivor participation and long-term success. Vertical prosecution is when law enforcement reaches out directly to the special prosecutor at the time of report by the sexual assault survivor and initial investigation. The team then acts together to ensure case work up and evidence gathering is done. This type of prosecution assists law enforcement to act quickly when survivors do make a report, to increase survivor participation, and overall successful prosecution.

Key Takeaways:

Interagency Collaboration: The report underscores the importance of seamless collaboration among law enforcement, forensic nurses, survivor advocacy organizations, and the DA’s Office. Coordinated efforts are essential to streamline the response, increasing the comfort of survivors throughout the process.

Timely and Compassionate Response: Data shows that the initial response phase significantly impacts survivor participation. Delays, lack of sensitivity, and communication breakdowns contribute to attrition. The report reiterates the necessity of survivor-centered response to mitigate these challenges. Adult Forensic

Interviews, for example, allow for the trauma that a survivor of sexual assault or a related offense may experience in multiple interviews to be mitigated through just one interview by a trained interviewer.

Comprehensive Training Programs: There is a need for training programs for stakeholders involved in sexual assault cases. Training should focus not only on legal and investigative aspects but also on trauma-informed approaches to create a more supportive environment for survivors. Training must be continually updated and reinforced as members may be replaced by newer, less experienced members in need of training. Training is also ever-evolving: statutes change, the courts issue new edits in caselaw, and techniques and methods alter the way in which investigations and prosecutions proceed.

Improved Data Collection and Analysis: The report emphasizes the importance of robust data collection methods to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of response protocols. Comprehensive data should be collected at each stage of the process, allowing agencies to identify bottlenecks, attrition and areas for improvement.

Enhancing Survivor Trust and Confidentiality: Building and maintaining trust is paramount for survivors to engage in the justice system. The report suggests adopting measures to decrease the time that investigations and prosecution takes and empowering survivors with control over their involvement and ensuring their privacy is protected. Fort Bend County agencies have recently adopted a Vertical Prosecution format with the District Attorney's Office that encourages all members to communicate as soon as an offense is reported. Consequently, law enforcement is encouraged to be proactive in gathering evidence helpful to the case with assistance from survivor advocates, prosecutors, nurses and others. This team approaches encourages survivors to feel protected and taken seriously while ensuring the offender will be held accountable with strong corroborative data, witnesses and other items.

SART Overview

MISSION:

The Fort Bend County Sexual Assault Response Team is comprised of representatives from Fort Bend County Women's Center, Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, Brookshire Police Department, Sugar Land Police Department, Rosenberg Police Department, Stafford Police Department, Richmond Police Department, Missouri City Police Department, City of Meadows Police Department, Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office, Katy Police Department, Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners Center for Forensic Excellence, Houston Methodist Hospital Health System, Memorial Hermann Health System, and Fulshear Police Department. The mission of the Fort Bend County Sexual Assault Response Team (FBCSART) is to work collaboratively to ensure a survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to adult sexual assaults, increase survivor and community safety, and hold offenders accountable.

VALUES:

I. SURVIVOR-CENTERED APPROACH

A. This approach is defined as the systematic focus on the needs of the survivor and accounts for the survivor's history, experience, and perspective, as well as the impact of the criminal justice process on them and their family and community. In a survivor-centered approach, the survivor's wishes, safety, and well-being are taken into strong consideration in all matters and procedures.

B. A survivor-centered approach seeks to minimize re-traumatization associated with the criminal justice process by providing the support of advocates and service providers, empowering survivors as engaged participants in the criminal justice process, and providing survivors an opportunity to play a role in seeing justice served.

C. This approach is one of the most important aspects of the collaboration that arises from SARTs: the knowledge that we gain from a collaborative response to sexual assault in our community promotes trust among partners and seeks to keep survivors at the center of our justice process.

II. TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

A. An understanding of trauma and its effects, as well as the principles of being trauma-informed, are key for service providers and criminal justice system professionals. We must understand trauma and its manifestations and approach all interactions through a trauma-informed lens.

B. Trauma-informed approach is a strengths-based framework that is responsive to the impact of trauma, emphasizing physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both SART responders and survivors; and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. The approach:

1. Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;

2. Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in survivors, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
3. Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
4. Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

III. REDUCE SURVIVOR-BLAMING

A. Survivor blaming refers to attitudes or beliefs that hold survivors partially or completely responsible for being sexually assaulted. Survivor blaming typically utilizes the argument that if the survivor had not made a particular choice, engaged in a particular activity, or acted in a particular way, this person would not have been assaulted. Survivors usually engage in this type of second guessing and hearing any variation of this theme from others adds to the trauma already being experienced.

B. Through collaborative response and cross-agency training, the SART seeks to ensure that the blame for the crime remains set on those who perpetrated the crime.

IV. TEAM BUILDING BETWEEN AGENCIES

A. The relationships that we build with each other as members of the SART are essential to achieve positive outcomes in sexual assault cases. Collaborative response provides a systematic response that allows survivors to feel supported, informed and involved. It is essential that this team make time to build and strengthen relationships and address issues that arise through a multi-disciplinary approach of its members, with the best interest of survivors in mind. We must also search for ways to increase collaboration between the partners.

B. The sharing of information and cross-training between agencies ensures that all members remain up to date on new statutes, caselaw, and techniques that result in more successful investigations and prosecutions of offenders.

V. STANDARDS AND TRAINING

A. SART Committee will ensure the policies and effort it puts forth promote best practices and effective intervention to address sexual assault in the county. To do this, the SART Committee will meet on at least a quarterly basis to ensure that SART protocols are evolving and remain trauma informed.

B. Members of the SART Committee will commit to attending and providing cross training opportunities between all partner agencies annually. Members also commit to respond to requests for cross training.

C. This Protocol will be reviewed and updated annually by the SART Committee. As part of the implementation process, there is a commitment by all partners to provide training to their agencies on the Protocol and all updates thereafter.

D. The SART Committee will plan and implement effective prevention strategies and collaborate with other agencies, including educational institutions, to address sexual assault in the County. Areas of focus may include sexual assault perpetrated by strangers or persons known to the survivor, predatory date rape, and drug-facilitated sexual assault.

Outline of Activities and Trainings

The SART team meets regularly, typically on a quarterly basis, bringing together professionals from varying fields. These meetings serve as a platform for collaboration and creation of the SART Protocol and information sharing. SART members drafted a protocol, incorporating best practices and trauma-informed approaches. The Protocols have been adapted and modified.

Members of the SART team attended a variety of cross- training regarding sexual assault. These trainings included Crimes Against Women Conference and the Advanced Trafficking Investigation class put on by the Fort Bend District Attorney's Office. Further, Members were trained in 2025 at several of the SART meetings. The Forensic Nurses each presented about their nursing programs and assistance that can be provided during sexual assault investigations. The Fort Bend District Attorney's Office taught Members in regard to Trafficking and how to conduct investigations where it is suspected that an Adult Survivor of Sexual Assault may also be a Trafficking victim. The Sugarland Police Department conducted a case study for group evaluation and input that resulted in feedback likely to assist the continuing investigation. Prosecutors also shared new, innovative skills with Members, such as utilizing a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam of a suspect during the course of an investigation.

In addition to the trainings that were attended by SART team members, several members of the SART participated in giving trainings to law enforcement and members of the community to better inform them of the obstacles in sexual assault cases and Fort Bend County's efforts to overcome those obstacles and hold offenders accountable. The Fort Bend District Attorney's Office also began utilizing a vertical approach in prosecution so as to provide a team approach at the first report of sexual assault by a survivor.

In conjunction with the trainings given, a Law Enforcement Pocket Guide (see Attachment 1) was developed to improve initial law enforcement response to sexual assault cases. The Pocket Guide incorporates trauma- informed practices in investigative procedures, survivor interviews, support mechanisms, and evidence collection and preservation.

SART Members updated the previous protocols in light of the additional training received and advances in techniques in investigation and prosecution. (See Attachment #2 for FULL updated protocols)

Data and Findings

With new members participating, not all data had been captured by the various, new-to-the SART agencies. It is expected that in the next reporting time-period that these agencies will have updated statistics for the upcoming time periods for review.

SART DATA 1/1/2024 – 8/31/2025 – Fort Bend County

Of the adult sexual assault exams given, a large majority of patients chose to report the sexual assault to law enforcement agencies.

LAW ENFORCEMENT DATA

RICHMOND PD

Number of Adult Sexual Assault Reports Taken – 9

Number of Adult Sexual Assault Cases filed with FBCDAO – 2

SUGARLAND PD

13 reports

1 Filed with FBDAO/Arrest

5 Inactive

7 Active

ROSENBERG PD

10 reports

1 open

2 arrests

FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

127 Reports

20 Filed with FBDAO

11 Active

MEADOWS PLACE POLICE DEPARTMENT

1 report

1 Active

KATY POLICE DEPARTMENT

9 reports

2 filed

1 Active

MISSOURI CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

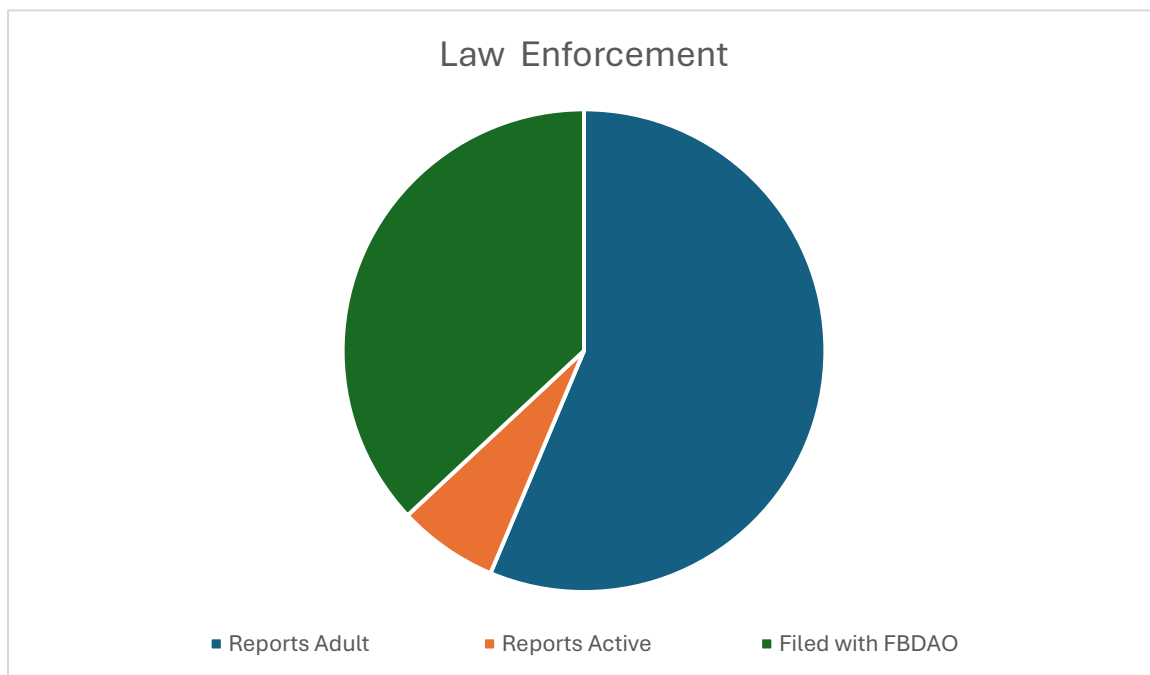
23 Reports

3 Filed with FBDAO

5 Active

* The Fort Bend Women's Center, Brookshire Police Department, Fulshear Police Department, and Stafford Police Department were unable to provide statistics but will be tracking data for next report in 2027.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Sexual Assault Reports | 218 |
| | |
| | |
| SA Cases filed w/ FBCDAO | 143 |
| Cases still Active | 26 |
| | |

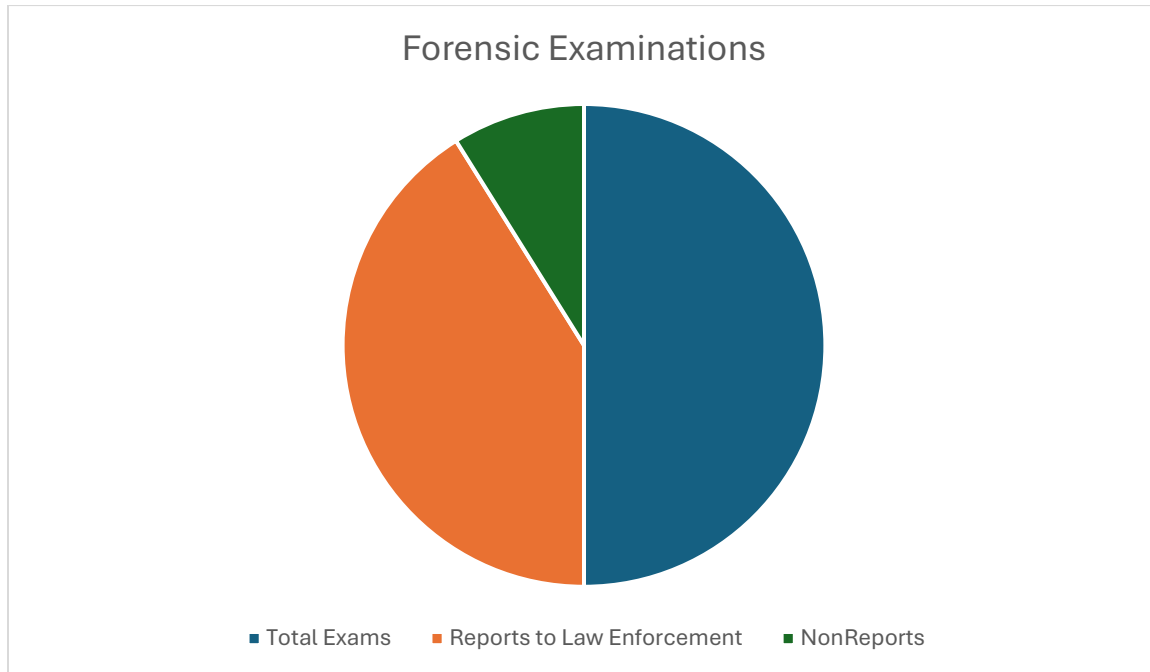


FORENSIC NURSES DATA

1/1/25-8/31/25 -

SA Reports: 163

SA Non-Reports: 29



MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITAL

2024 - 32

SA Reports: 27

SA Non-Reports: 5

2025 (01.01 - 08.31) - 21

Reports: 15

Non-Reports: 6

HOUSTON METHODIST HOSPITAL

2024 - 20

SA Reports: 15

SA Non-reports: 5

1/1/25-8/31/25: 24

Reports: 21

Non-Reports: 3

TEXAS FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS CENTER FOR FORENSIC EXCELLENCE

2024 - 45

Reports: 39

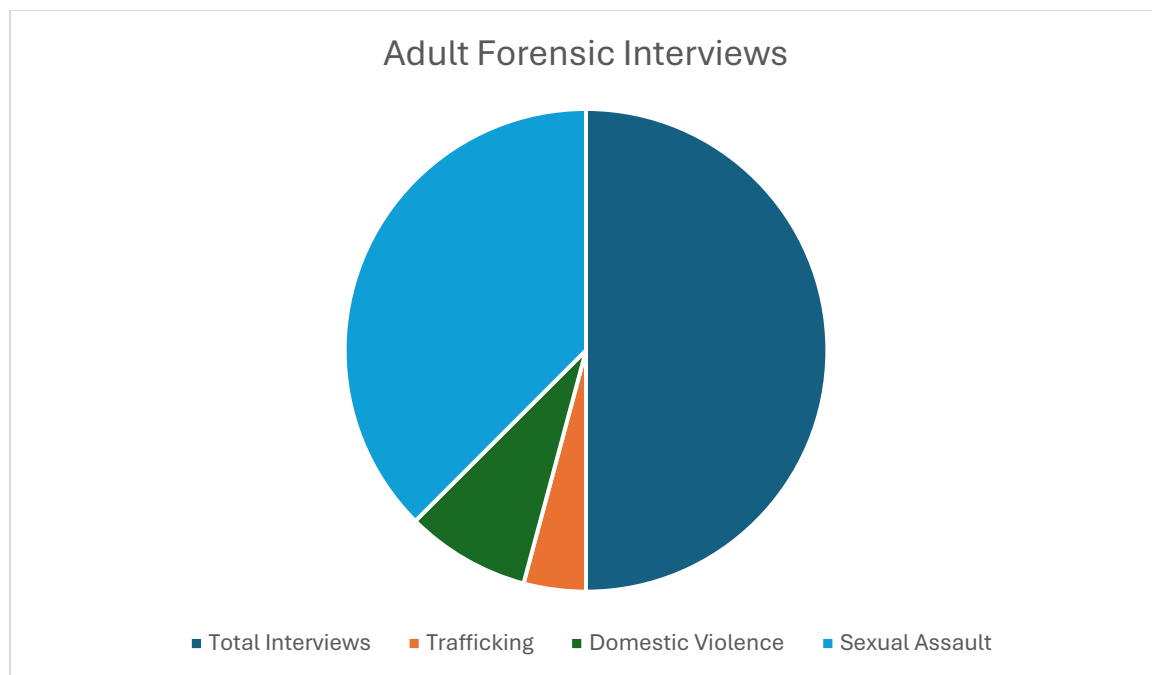
Non-Reports: 6

2025 (01.01 - 08.31) - 21

Reports: 17

Non-Reports: 4

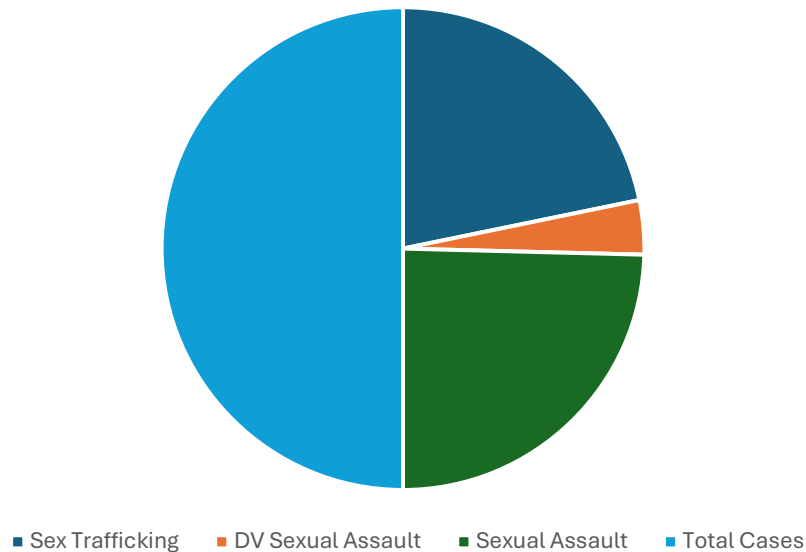
Adult Forensic Interviews: 12



**FORT BEND
COUNTY DISTRICT
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

| | <i># Cases</i> |
|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Intake (Cases Received)*</i> | |
| Sex Trafficking | 108 |
| DV Related – Adult Sexual Assault | 18 |
| Adult Sexual Assault | 122 |
| | |
| <i>Case Status – Adult Sexual Assault*</i> | |
| Filed | 56 |
| Accepted | 48 |
| Indicted | 34 |
| No Bill | 5 |
| Rejected/Declined | 9 |
| Pending In Odyssey System Current Number Actually Open/Pending with Adult Sex Crimes Prosecutor | 40 25 |

CASES RECEIVED



*While data may indicate certain numbers, we have continued to work on cases since the date of 8/31/2025. In addition, statistics included could be + or - 15 cases, might be same defendant with multiple charges, and numbers are reflective of sheer number of cases not defendants.

Conclusion

The Fort Bend County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) has taken significant steps in our commitment to survivor-centered, multidisciplinary collaboration. We have established a comprehensive SART Protocol, conducted successful and regular interagency meetings, implemented improved practices, created a specialized law enforcement pocket guide, attended cross-training on sexual assault, and started collecting comprehensive data, particularly from all forensic nursing providers in Fort Bend County.

The development of a unified protocol has been a cornerstone achievement, fostering a shared understanding and approach among team members from diverse disciplines. The regular meetings have served as a platform for collaboration, providing an avenue for communication, knowledge exchange, and improvement toward a more survivor-centered response to sexual assault cases. We have taken steps toward comprehensive data collection, particularly with the active participation of all forensic nursing providers in Fort Bend County, allowing us to evaluate the causes and correlations of where survivor attrition occurs in the process.

However, it is also important to acknowledge areas that require improvement. Data collection needs to be expanded and we need to ensure all agencies collect and provide data to ensure uniformity and completeness across all participating entities. Going forward, we will have the time and ability to focus on ensuring that we complete a case review.

As we move forward, the Fort Bend County SART remains dedicated to the ongoing enhancement of our response capabilities. Building on our accomplishments, we commit to refining data collection methods, streamlining case review processes, and maintaining survivor-centered best practices. By continually improving and adapting to the evolving landscape of sexual assault response, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide unwavering support to survivors and work collaboratively towards a safer and more just community. Innovation is key as we seek to improve responses to reports by survivors and improve investigations and prosecutions.