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Agency Name: Fort Bend County

Grant/App: 1364525 **Start Date:** 10/1/2026 **End Date:** 9/30/2027

Project Title: Victim Witness Staff Expansion

Status: Application Pending Submission

Narrative Information

Introduction

The purpose of this program is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process. Services may include the following:

- responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims;
- assisting victims in stabilizing their lives after a victimization;
- assisting victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and
- providing victims with safety and security.

Culturally Specific and Underserved Populations

Does your program have a primary focus on serving a culturally specific population? (The organization must do more than merely provide services to an underserved population as defined by 34 USC § 12291 (a)(46) or culturally specific group; rather, the organization's primary focus must be on providing culturally competent services as defined by 34 USC § 12291(a)(9) designed to meet the specific needs of the target population in order to justify a YES response in the section below.)

Yes

No

Certifications

In addition to the requirements found in existing statute, regulation, and the funding announcement, this program requires applicant organizations to certify compliance with the following:

Resolution from Governing Body

Applications from nonprofit corporations, local units of governments, and other political subdivisions must submit a fully executed resolution with the application to be considered eligible for funding. The resolution must contain the following elements (see [Sample Resolution](#)):

- Authorization by your governing body for the submission of the application to the Public Safety Office (PSO) that clearly identifies the name of the project for which funding is requested;
- A commitment to provide all applicable matching funds;
- A designation of the name and/or title of an authorized official who is given the authority to apply for, accept, reject, alter, or terminate a grant;
- A designation of the name and/or title of a financial officer who is given the authority to submit financial and/or performance reports or alter a grant; and
- A written assurance that, in the event of loss or misuse of grant funds, the governing body will return all funds to PSO.

Constitutional Compliance

Applicant assures that it will not engage in any activity that violates Constitutional law including profiling based upon race.

Forensic Medical Examination Payments

Health care facilities shall conduct a forensic medical examination of a victim of an alleged sexual assault if the victim arrived at the facility within 120 hours after the assault occurred and the victim consents to the examination. The victim is not required to participate in the investigation or prosecution of an offense as a condition of receiving a forensic medical examination, nor pay for the forensic examination or the evidence collection kit. Crime Victim Compensation funds may be used to pay for the medical portion of the exam unless the victim of sexual assault is required to seek reimbursement for the examination from their insurance carrier. If a health care facility does not provide diagnosis or treatment services for sexual assault victims, the facility is required to refer the victim to a facility that provides those services.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Applicant agrees to maintain the confidentiality of client-counselor information and research data, as required by state and federal law. Personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied may not be disclosed; or, reveal individual client information without informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought. If release of information is compelled by statutory or court mandate, reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information will be made and steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of information will be taken.

Activities that Compromise Victim Safety and Recovery

Applicant agrees to not engage in activities that jeopardize victim safety, deter or prevent physical or emotional healing for victims, or allow offenders to escape responsibility for their actions.

Polygraph Testing Prohibition

A peace officer or attorney representing the state may not require an adult or child victim of an alleged sex offense to submit to a polygraph examination or other truth telling device as a condition for proceeding with the investigation of such an offense. In addition, the refusal of a victim to submit to a polygraph or other truth telling examination will not prevent the investigation, charging, or prosecution of an alleged sex offense or on the basis of the results of a polygraph examination.

Protection Orders

Victims applying for a protective order or their attorney may not bear the costs associated with the filing of an order of protections.

Offender Firearm Prohibition

The applicant certifies that its judicial administrative policies and practices include notification to domestic violence offenders of the requirements delineated in section 18 USC § 992(g)(8) and (g)(9).

Criminal Charges

In connection with the prosecution of any misdemeanor or felony domestic violence offense, the victim may

not bear the costs associated with the filing of criminal charges against a domestic violence offender, issuance or service of a warrant, or witness subpoena.

Cybersecurity Training Requirement

Local units of governments must comply with the Cybersecurity Training requirements described in Section 772.012 and Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code. Local governments determined to not be in compliance with the cybersecurity requirements required by Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code are ineligible for OOG grant funds until the second anniversary of the date the local government is determined ineligible. Government entities must annually certify their compliance with the training requirements using the [Cybersecurity Training Certification for State and Local Government](#). A copy of the Training Certification must be uploaded to your eGrants application. For more information or to access available training programs, visit the Texas Department of Information Resources [Statewide Cybersecurity Awareness Training](#) page.

Criminal History Reporting

Entities receiving funds from PSO must be located in a county that has an average of 90% or above on both adult and juvenile dispositions entered into the computerized criminal history database maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as directed in the *Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 66*. The disposition completeness percentage is defined as the percentage of arrest charges a county reports to DPS for which a disposition has been subsequently reported and entered into the computerized criminal history system.

Counties applying for grant awards from the Office of the Governor must commit that the county will report at least 90% of convictions within five business days to the Criminal Justice Information System at the Department of Public Safety.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

Eligible applicants operating a law enforcement agency must be current on reporting complete UCR data and the Texas specific reporting mandated by 411.042 TGC, to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) for inclusion in the annual Crime in Texas (CIT) publication. To be considered eligible for funding, applicants must have submitted a full twelve months of accurate data to DPS for the most recent calendar year by the deadline(s) established by DPS. Due to the importance of timely reporting, applicants are required to submit complete and accurate UCR data, as well as the Texas-mandated reporting, on a no less than monthly basis and respond promptly to requests from DPS related to the data submitted.

Entities That Collect Sexual Assault/Sex Offense Evidence or Investigate/Prosecute Sexual Assault or Other Sex Offenses

In accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 420.034, any facility or entity that collects evidence for sexual assault or other sex offenses or investigates or prosecutes a sexual assault or other sex offense for which evidence has been collected, must participate in the statewide electronic tracking system developed and implemented by the Texas Department of Public Safety. Visit DPS's [Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program](#) website for more information or to set up an account to begin participating. Additionally, per Section 420.042 "A law enforcement agency that receives evidence of a sexual assault or other sex offense...shall submit that evidence to a public accredited crime laboratory for analysis no later than the 30th day after the date on which that evidence was received." A law enforcement agency in possession of a significant number of Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK) where the 30-day window has passed may be considered noncompliant.

Immigration Legal Services

PSO prioritizes funding of projects that provide a full spectrum of counseling, crisis services, and other direct victim services. PSO will not fund projects that focus primarily on immigration legal services and do not provide a significant level of other types of victim services.

Legal Representation in Divorce and Custody Cases

PSO limits eligibility for legal representation in divorce and custody cases to circumstances where the survivor has been directly victimized by intimate partner violence (IPV) within the last six (6) months. This may include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner against the survivor or survivor's kin sharing the residence. Additionally, legal services in divorce and custody cases funded under this award are limited to emergency order assistance, safety planning, client representation in divorce or guardianship proceedings, and other family law matters directly resulting from the victimization. Through acceptance of this award, grantee agrees that reimbursement for divorce and custody-related legal services will be limited to circumstances listed above.

Discrimination

Applicant agrees not to discriminate against victims because they disagree with the State's prosecution of the criminal case.

Records

Applicant agrees to maintain daily time and attendance records specifying the time devoted to allowable victim services.

Volunteers

If awarded VOCA funds, applicant agrees to use volunteers to support either the project or other agency-wide services/activities, unless PSO determines that a compelling reason exists to waive this requirement.

Crime Victims' Compensation

Applicant agrees to assist crime victims in applying for crime victims' compensation benefits.

Community Efforts

Applicant agrees to promote community efforts to aid crime victims. Applicants should promote, within the community, coordinated public and private efforts to aid crime victims. Coordination efforts qualify an organization to receive these funds, but are not activities that can be supported with these funds.

Civil Rights Information

Applicant agrees to maintain statutorily required civil rights statistics on victims served by race, national origin, sex, age, and disability of victims served, within the timeframe established by PSO. This requirement is waived when providing services, such as telephone counseling, where soliciting the information may be inappropriate or offensive to the crime victim.

Victims of Federal Crime

Applicant agrees to provide equal services to victims of federal crime. (Note: Victim of federal crime is a victim of an offense that violates a federal criminal statute or regulation; federal crimes also include crimes that occur in an area where the federal government has jurisdiction, such as Indian reservations, some national parks, some federal buildings, and military installations.)

No Charge

Applicant agrees to provide grant-funded services at no charge to victims of crime. Applicants are also prohibited from billing Crime Victims Compensation, private insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare for services provided using VOCA funds.

Effective Services

Applicants applying for funds to provide victim services must demonstrate a record of providing effective services to crime victims. (See "Eligible Organizations" in the Funding Announcement.)

College Campus Confidential Direct Services Providers

All personnel compensated through OOG or match funds are Confidential Direct Service Providers that maintain victim's confidentiality for all case information (written or oral) and share information only at the victim's request and with the victim's informed consent, except when release of information is required by law. Confidential Direct Service Providers compensated with grant funds shall not be required to disclose client or case information to any entity, including a campus Title IX officer or coordinator, except when release of information is required by law. A victim may not be coerced or required to file a report or disclose information regarding their victimization with any entity as a condition of receiving services from a Confidential Direct Service Provider.

Failure to comply with this certification may result in PSO, at its sole discretion, withholding reimbursement on personnel line items contained in the program budget until satisfactory evidence of compliance is provided.

Compliance with State and Federal Laws, Programs and Procedures

Local Units of Government: Local units of government, including cities, counties and other general purpose political subdivisions, as appropriate, and institutions of higher education that operate a law enforcement agency, must comply with all aspects of the programs and procedures utilized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") to: (1) notify DHS of all information requested by DHS related to illegal aliens in Agency's custody; and (2) detain such illegal aliens in accordance with requests by DHS. Additionally, counties and municipalities may NOT have in effect, purport to have in effect, or make themselves subject to or bound by, any law, rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) require or authorize the public disclosure of federal law enforcement information in order to conceal, harbor, or shield from detection fugitives from justice or aliens illegally in the United States, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(iii); (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3); (3) encourage or induce an alien to come to, enter, or reside in the United States in violation of law, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(iv); (4) result in the illegal transport or movement of aliens within the United States, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii). Lastly, eligible applicants must comply with all provisions, policies, and penalties found in Chapter 752, Subchapter C of the Texas Government Code.

Each local unit of government, and institution of higher education that operates a law enforcement agency, must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the [CEO/Law Enforcement Certifications and Assurances Form](#) certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements. This Form is required for each application submitted to PSO and is active until August 31, 2027 or the end of the grant period, whichever is later.

Non-profit Organizations: Each non-profit 501(c)(3) organization must certify that it does not have, and will continue not to have any policy, procedure, or agreement (written or unwritten) that in any way encourages, induces, entices, or aids any violations of immigration laws. Additionally, the organization certifies that it does not have in effect, purport to have in effect, and is not subject to or bound by any rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) encourage the concealment, harboring, or shielding from detection of fugitives from justice or aliens who illegally came to, entered, or remained in the United States, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(iii); (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3); (3) encourage or induce an alien to come to, enter, or reside in the United States in violation of law, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(iv); (4) result in the illegal transport or movement of aliens within the United States, 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii). Lastly, the organization certifies that it will not adopt, enforce, or endorse a policy which prohibits or materially limits the enforcement of immigration laws, and will not, as demonstrated by pattern or practice, prohibit or materially limit the enforcement of immigration laws.

Each non-profit organization must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the [CEO/NGO Certifications and Assurances Form](#) certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements.

Employment of Advocates for Sexual Assault

Will this project use grant funds to support the employment of Advocates for Survivors of Sexual Assault as defined by Chapter 420, section 420.051 of the Texas Government Code?

- Yes
- No

If yes, will those advocates provide in-room hospital accompaniment during sexual assault forensic exams as defined by Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 56A.351?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If yes, have those advocates completed a sexual assault training program certified by the Attorney General as defined by Texas Government Code 420.011?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Civil Rights Liaison

A civil rights liaison who will serve as the grantee's civil rights point of contact and who will be responsible for ensuring that the grantee meets all applicable civil rights requirements must be designated. The designee will act as the grantee's liaison in civil rights matters with PSO and with the federal Office of Justice Programs.

Enter the Name of the Civil Rights Liaison:

Enter the Address for the Civil Rights Liaison:

Enter the Phone Number for the Civil Rights Liaison [(999) 999-9999 x9999]:

Overall Certification

Each applicant agency must certify to the specific requirements detailed above as well as to comply with all requirements within the PSO Funding Announcement, the *Guide to Grants*, the *Grantee Conditions and Responsibilities*, any authorizing or applicable state and federal statutes and regulations to be eligible for this program.

I certify to all of the application content & requirements.

Project Abstract :

The Fort Bend County District Attorney Office's Victim Witness Expansion Project provides a wide range of services supporting victims of crime to speed their recovery and guide them through the criminal justice process, which includes responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims through trauma-informed care, assisting victims in stabilizing their lives after victimization with a variety of resources, assisting victims in understanding and participating in the criminal justice system, educating victims as to their rights in the criminal justice system, and providing victims with safety and security through assistance with obtaining protective orders and regular updates on criminal events related to their respective case.

Problem Statement :

The 2020 U.S. Census for Fort Bend County reported a population of 822,779 compared to 585,375 residents in 2010. With a 10-year population growth rate of 34%, Fort Bend County is considered one of the nation's top counties with the most significant gains in population nationwide. Rapid population growth in Fort Bend County in recent years required increasing the number of law enforcement officers, investigators, prosecutors, judges, and available courts to address the increased number of cases and subsequent victims of crime. Recent projections (2023 Population Estimates, Texas Demographic Institute, University of Texas San Antonio) show a 10.8% population increase to 911,893 residents between 2020 and 2024. Rapid population increases and reported offenses require additional victim witness personnel to effectively address the ever-increasing number of victims to assist them in accessing mandated assistance and other supportive services throughout the community. The Victim Witness Assistance Division assists crime victims by providing ongoing support throughout the life of the case, which may take several years to dispose of, thereby increasing the caseload for each team member. The Victim Witness Assistance division consists of six staff members, one Director of Victim Services, one Deputy Director of Victim Services, two Victim Assistance Coordinators, and two Administrative Assistants to assist victims, whose cases are assigned randomly to five District Courts and six County Courts-at-Law. However, the projected population indicates reaching over 1 million residents by 2025, and community stakeholders have advocated with the state legislature to add more district courts and county courts-at-law in the coming year. State representatives from Fort Bend County filed a bill in the Texas

Legislature to add much-needed new courts to increase capacity to adjudicate the increasing number of cases courts are seeing across the board in Fort Bend County. Additional courts combined with increasing reported crimes and crime victims require additional victim witness personnel to manage the caseloads associated with those respective courts.

Supporting Data :

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety's 2023 "Crime in Texas" report, Fort Bend County reported 10,404 offenses, a 13% decrease from 11,993 offenses in 2022. Despite the decline in crimes reported, the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office assisted 6,011 victims in FY 2023-2024, reflecting an 8% increase compared to 5,541 victims served last year through the Victim Services Division. Crime victims received a variety of services and support this year, including accompanying 268 victims to court for various hearings and trials, assisting 1,788 victims with completing and filing compensation claims through the Texas Crime Victims Compensation Fund, providing 3,060 victims with information about the criminal justice process and notifying 1,551 victims concerning criminal justice events related to their cases as well as accompanying 379 victims to their interviews with the prosecutors working on their case. The Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office does not limit victim assistance services to only those mandated by the Code of Criminal Procedure and assists victims associated with every case filed by our office.

Project Approach & Activities:

The Victim Witness Division of the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office continues to advocate for victims of violent crime in Fort Bend County by coordinating the initial transition of their case from law enforcement's original investigation and arrest to prosecution through the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office. Victim Witness Assistance Coordinators closely work with victim liaisons in various law enforcement agencies throughout Fort Bend County to support victims throughout the life cycle of their cases. Victim support services provided by the District Attorney's Office include accompanying victims to court hearings and trial, preparing victims to testify at trial, assisting victims with filing claims to receive financial reimbursement of qualified expenses through the Texas Crime Victims Compensation Fund and notifying victims of activities regarding the status and final disposition of their case. This program also educates victims about their rights in the criminal justice system and their role in the legal process. The Victim Witness Expansion Project continues implementing proactive strategies to meet the increasing needs of victims in Fort Bend County. Future activities will increase the program's capacity by identifying new resources through other community stakeholders, nonprofit organizations, social services, law enforcement, and victim advocacy groups to provide a network of services and resources that directly assist crime victims. The Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office Victim Witness Assistance Division conducts personal interviews with crime victims regarding the prosecution of their cases while working with law enforcement's crime victim liaisons to provide a seamless transition for crime victims from the investigation to the prosecution of a crime. We will continue to provide the personal attention given to victims (i.e., court accompaniment, arranging meetings with prosecutors, and explanation of court procedures and protocol). Crime victims are assisted promptly and contacted within 24-48 hours. The staff team contacts victims to work towards developing a trust-based relationship to reduce the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by crime victims. The Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office does not limit victim services to only those mandated by the Code of Criminal Procedure and assists victims associated with every case filed by our office. Our program will continue to contact every victim of crime, violent and non-violent, regardless of race or ethnicity. This contact is established by mail, telephone, email, SMS (Short Messaging Service), or in person.

Capacity & Capabilities:

The Victim Witness Division of the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office consists of a Director of Victim Services, a Deputy Director of Victim Services, two Victim Witness Assistance Coordinators, and two Administrative Assistants, one of whom has a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. This support team provides personalized attention and hands-on support to victims of violent crime, regardless of race or ethnicity, to minimize the psychological and emotional trauma that manifests as a result of being a crime victim. The Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office represents the 248th Judicial District on behalf of the people of the State of Texas in criminal prosecutions for crimes in Fort Bend County. There are 89 prosecutors, 21 investigators, and 62 staff for 172 employees. The Victim Witness Assistance Division assists victims through the criminal justice process. It employs one Director of Victim Services, one Deputy Director of Victim Services, two Victim Assistance Coordinators, and two Administrative Assistants. The current Director of Victim Services has a Bachelor's Degree in Victim Studies and several years of experience in victim services in the District Attorney's Office setting. The Deputy Director also has several years of experience working in the victim services field with specific skills in obtaining protective orders and working with social services. One of the Victim Assistance

Coordinators, a retired police officer assigned to be the victim liaison at that agency, has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and over twenty years of experience in the victim services field. The other Victim Assistance Coordinator has many years of experience in victim services as well as a strong background in customer service. In addition to office and courtroom experience, the Coordinators also attend multiple trainings throughout the year to receive updates and new information in the victim services field. They also have strong backgrounds in criminal justice, and one staff member has a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. They also attend conferences and activities to further their knowledge of victim services. The Administrative Assistant has over 10 years of experience working in the criminal justice system in different capacities, such as working in a criminal defense law practice, pre-trial services, and the Fort Bend County District Clerk's Office. The Administrative Assistant processes crime victim compensation and victim impact forms, keeps victims' files up to date, and ensures that investigators and prosecutors have timely access to this information. The Administrative Assistant also manages inquiries from victims, including those who call our office or visit in person seeking assistance. The combined experience, education, and passion of this division qualify them to provide services to the crime victims of our county using the methods, approaches, and activities mentioned above.

Performance Management :

The primary goal of the project is to reduce the trauma associated with victimization to help victims live in a healthy and safe environment and to provide services mandated by law that victims so rightly deserve. To do that, our Director of Victims Services, Deputy Director, Victim Assistance Coordinators, and Administrative Assistants assist the victims we serve by providing information, status, and support regarding their cases. The administrative assistants send victim impact statements, crime victim compensation packets, and court-setting notification letters. The Director of Victim Services, Deputy Director, and Victim Assistance Coordinators schedule personal interviews between victims and prosecutors to discuss their cases. They also address a victim's specific needs and make appropriate referrals for counseling and other resources to meet those needs. All Victim Witness Assistance Coordinators accompany crime victims to court to lend support and provide an explanation of the proceedings. Victim Witness Assistance Coordinators also frequently contact victims via email, phone, or in-person appointments. They also make themselves available to victims who come to the office without an appointment and seek assistance. To achieve these goals, we must continue this Staff Expansion Project to effectively continue the services, care, and consideration that every crime victim deserves.

Target Group :

Our target group is all crime victims (of crimes committed by adults) in Fort Bend County, regardless of gender, age, or race/ethnicity. The county's demographics are diverse, and we strive to provide services to all groups represented.

Evidence-Based Practices:

Crime victims' rights and the responsibilities of the Victim Assistance Division of the Fort Bend County District Attorney's Office are outlined in Chapter 56 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, which mandates division processes, activities, and support services by law. The division follows procedures outlined by the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Victim Assistance Division. Often, the methodology we ascribe to and the activities we perform are based on training and information we have received from attending training and webinars. Well-established prosecution-based victim services divisions train on best practices for providing services to crime victims. We also stay updated on the field of victim services through organizations including the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), the National Center for Victims of Crime, the Office of the Attorney General of Texas-Crime Victims Services Division, the Texas District and County Attorney's Association-Victim Services Division, and other organizations that provide training and updates.