

# **Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force Bylaws**

## **ARTICLE I – Name**

The name shall be the Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force.

## **ARTICLE II – Mission**

To ensure that Austin/Travis County is a community where all victims feel safe to report crime and receive the emotional, physical, and financial support they need to fully recover.

## **ARTICLE III – Purpose**

The purpose of the Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force is to assist community policymakers, service providers, funders, advocates and citizens in addressing the comprehensive needs of victims in Austin and Travis County, and to build the capacity of the community and its service providers as the demand for victim services expand or need enhancement (we don't have to add this info now, but I do think it should be added soon, as it is one of the only activities the VSTF members can effect)

## **ARTICLE IV – Responsibilities**

**Section 1.** Responsibilities of the Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force shall include:

- Serve as the official planning body of the Community Action Network and the Community Justice Council regarding victim services;
- Foster community-wide involvement in policy development, planning, and implementation of strategies by ensuring ongoing representation of community stakeholders;
- Maximize resources by jointly establishing and achieving goals and objectives based on assessments of needs in the community, pooling resources, and integrating services;
- Develop local, state, and federal linkages;
- Build consensus among service providers on a foundation of knowledge, understanding, and trust; identify and address barriers to collaboration;
- Enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of service and criminal justice systems; identify and address gaps in services and develop additional resources;
- Oversee updates and revisions to the Community Action Network's Victims of Violent Crime Assessment;
- Promote community awareness about victims' needs and available resources.
- (I'd like to see us work on a list of measures that will demonstrate our progress in completing our responsibilities)

**Section 2.** Letters of Support:

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Formal letters of support may be issued by this task force as a way of supporting the agencies which seek funding to improve the overall delivery of victim services in Travis County. In order for an organization to receive a letter of support, the following criteria must be met:

- The applicant organization must be a member in good standing of the Austin Travis County Victim Services Task Force, and/or
- The need stated in the application must correspond with the goals of the task force, be identified as a need by the task force, or correspond with the goals and needs addressed in the most recent copy of the Austin Travis County Victim Services Assessment.

Letters of Support will not be issued if the above criteria are not met. Organizations that request a letter of support will submit the request to the Executive Committee. Those who are denied may appeal to the Victims Services Steering Committee.

## **ARTICLE V – Membership and Organization**

### **Section 1. General Membership**

General membership shall be recruited from a broad spectrum of the community, including but not limited to providers of mandated victim services, community-based victim services providers, advocates, survivors and victims, local and state government, neighborhood leaders, the faith community, funders, and others whose voice will meet the goal of fostering community-wide involvement.

### **Section 2.**

Membership should not be restricted. Members will be expected to update their membership forms annually. Members will be removed from the membership list if they miss 50% of stated meetings within the election year. Members who are not current in attendance will be placed on “inactive status” until they complete and turn in a new membership application. It will take attendance at two meetings within four months for inactive members or new members to be placed on “active “ status. New members may be received at any time during the year when they meet the above qualifications. Anyone may attend the Task Force meetings.

### **Section 3.**

The responsibilities and rights of the membership are to vote at the annual meeting and at any other meeting called as a “Membership Meeting”. The members shall elect the Steering Committee at the annual meeting. The members may issue a call for a “Membership Meeting” to the Steering Committee upon petition by 25% of the members.

### **Section 4. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee shall consist of 29 members elected by the membership. The Steering Committee slots shall represent mandated and non-mandated services, specific types of victims and specific types of services (see Attachment A). The Steering Committee members represent not only his/her agency, but shall represent the interests of coalitions, task forces or other agencies that relate to the specified issue area. The Steering Committee may fill any vacancies in its membership that occur between annual meetings by majority vote of the Steering Committee members present at any regular meeting. The Steering Committee’s responsibility is to direct and coordinate the business of the Task Force at regularly stated meetings. Only those who are members of the Steering Committee may vote. The total membership will be advised of those meetings and will have voice at the meetings at a set time on the agenda. Members of the Steering Committee will submit the name of an alternate to represent the same interests as the member. The alternate should stay informed of the ongoing work of the Task Force.

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## **Section 5. Executive Committee**

The Steering Committee will elect the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will consist of two co-chairs with staggered two-year terms, the immediate past chair, 3 at-large members, and the chairs of standing committees. Additionally, the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) and the Community Justice Council will have non-voting seats on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will be responsible for giving direction and leadership to the Steering Committee, including setting meeting agendas and making necessary decisions between regularly stated meetings.

## **Section 6. Standing Committees**

The Executive Committee will establish and dissolve standing and ad hoc committees as needed. The Executive Committee will have authority to name the chairs of the committees, and these chairpersons will serve on the Executive Committee. Any member may choose to serve on a committee, and committee chairpersons may appoint members.

## **Section 7. Absences and Vacancies**

If the Chair is absent, the Co-chair will preside at any stated or called meeting. In the event of a resignation of an officer, the Executive Committee may recommend a replacement at a called semi-annual membership meeting in April or wait until the regular annual meeting.

## **Section 8. Meetings**

Meetings of the Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force are open to the public. The calendar of meeting dates will be set at the beginning of the year and distributed to members. This calendar will serve as meeting notice to the members of the Task Force. Annual membership meetings will be held in January. A semi-annual meeting may be held in April to address membership and election agenda or any special needs determined by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may call special meetings with notice given to the total membership.

## **Section 9. Notices and Voting**

Members in good standing are eligible to vote. When the Task Force member is not present, the alternate may have full voting privileges. There will be no voting by proxy. Each member of the steering committee will have one vote.

## **Section 10. Staff Support**

The Chair will be responsible for identifying a person within their agency to provide administrative support to the Task Force.

## **ARTICLE VI – Bylaws**

### **Section 1. Ratification**

These bylaws and future modifications adopted by the Austin/Travis County Victim Services Task Force will be ratified by a majority vote of the Task Force membership.

### **Section 2. Amending**

These bylaws may be amended at a regularly scheduled meeting by the Task Force, with recommendations from the Executive Committee and with a thirty-day notice to the membership requesting comments. At a minimum, these bylaws will be reviewed on an annual basis in January.

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Bylaws**

*Adopted: August 12, 2003*  
*Amended: January 12, 2004*  
*Amended: January 10, 2005*  
*Amended: January 9, 2006*  
*Amended: January 8, 2007*

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**ATTACHMENT A  
Steering Committee Slots**

| <b>No. of<br/>Voting Slots</b>               | <b><i>Mandated Services</i></b>   |
|--|---|
| 1  | Travis County District Attorney   |
| 1  | Travis County Attorney  |
| 1  | Austin Police Department – Victim Services                                      |
| 1  | Travis County Sheriff’s Office – Victim Services                                |
| 1  | Travis County Juvenile Probation  |
| 1  | Travis County Community Supervision and<br>Corrections Division                 |
| 1  | Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Community<br>Justice Assistance Division |
| <b><i>Multidisciplinary Teams</i></b>        |   |
| 1  | Family Violence Protection Team   |
| 1  | Child Protection Team   |
| 1  | Sexual Assault Response Team  |
| <b><i>Types of Organizations/Victims</i></b> |   |
| 2  | Children  |
| 1  | Elderly   |
| 1  | Immigrant   |
| 2  | Persons with Disabilities   |
| 1  | Intimate Partner Violence   |
| 1  | Rape/Sexual Assault   |
| 1  | Homicide  |
| 1  | DWI   |
| 1  | Hate Crime  |
| 1  | Legal Services  |
| 1  | Mental Health Services  |
| 1  | Medical Services  |
| 1  | Faith Based Community   |
| 2  | Survivor/Community Member   |
| 1  | Higher Education/Workforce Development  |
| 1  | Secondary Education   |