

PROSECUTORS' AND INVESTIGATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATING WITH VICTIM ADVOCATES

A report to the Houston, TX Sexual Assault Kit Action-Research Working Group

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2011, the National Institute of Justice funded the Houston Police Department to form a multidisciplinary team to study the problem of sexual assault kits (SAK) that were collected but never submitted to a crime lab for screening and testing. The Houston Action-Research Project sought to understand the factors that produced the volume of unsubmitted SAKs, the way forensic evidence is used during criminal investigations and prosecutions of sexual assaults, and what stakeholders should expect when large numbers of previously unsubmitted SAKs get tested. The project adopted a holistic approach and considered the broader issue of responses, beyond testing the kits, to sexual assaults in the community.

Houston's Action-Research Project Working Group includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Houston Forensic Science Center¹
- Harris County District Attorney's Office
- Harris Health System
- Houston Area Women's Center
- Houston Police Department Sex Crimes Investigative Units
- Memorial Hermann Health System
- Sam Houston State University – Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology
- University of Texas at Austin – Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The group has been working collaboratively and collecting data that has allowed for an understanding of multiple aspects of the local response system. The organizations that have been working on this project have also been implementing and evaluating reforms that are meant to improve the response to sexual assaults. Action research entails an iterative process in which research evidence informs responses and for this reason the project has generated multiple research reports. This is one of a number of reports and presentations that will be released to help other jurisdictions learn from our experiences as they seek to better understand and improve their own practices.

Learn more about the project at www.houstonsakresearch.org

¹ During the course of the project the crime lab was re-organized so that, in April 2014, the crime lab was no longer part of the Houston Police Department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROSECUTORS' AND INVESTIGATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATING WITH VICTIM ADVOCATES

Purpose

This report provides information the working group can use when planning to implement new models for involving victim advocates in investigations and prosecutions of sexual assault cases.

Data

Survey and interview data collected from HCDAO prosecutors and investigators in the HPD adult and juvenile sex crimes units were analyzed to understand their perspectives on the role victim advocates play in sexual assault cases and on collaborating with victim advocates.

Results

- Prosecutors have positive views about the roles victim advocates play in the criminal justice process. Advocates are believed to provide support for victims, reduce victims' stress, and enhance communication with victims.
- Adult and juvenile sex crimes investigators hold different perspectives on victim advocates. Investigators from the adult unit report less positive views about collaborating with advocates.
 - Specifically, investigators from the adult unit questioned the wisdom of involving advocates in the victim notification process. Despite this, advocates are believed to provide assistance in several ways.
- Important barriers must be overcome to create closer working relationships between victim advocates and adult sex crimes investigators. Advocates' roles in the new model and their objectives must be clearly defined for investigators and for advocates.

Recommendations

- Carefully plan and develop the new model of advocate involvement.
- Clearly define the roles for advocates in the new model.
- The new model should enhance communication opportunities for victims, investigators, and prosecutors.
- Training on and clear communication about the new model should occur.

BACKGROUND

An important objective of the action-research project is to identify potential ways to enhance the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault crimes. Through discussions with members of the project working group and the collection of data from investigators and prosecutors it has become clear that victim participation is crucial to effective justice system processing. The working group has been identifying ways to enhance victims' participation in the criminal justice process and to assess whether services should be improved. The working group has also considered best practices for notifying victims in cold cases. Effective notification practices may promote greater victim involvement in the process and lead to improved criminal justice outcomes.

Greater victim advocate involvement is one change that may enhance investigations, prosecutions, and victim notification. In addition to improving criminal justice outcomes, greater advocate involvement may improve outcomes for victims. The project working group attempted to create closer collaborations between a victim advocate from the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) and the Houston Police Department (HPD) adult sex crimes unit in March 2012. This collaboration sought to involve a community advocate more closely in the process of contacting victims in older cases with CODIS hits. Traditional practices have not often entailed collaboration between adult sex crime investigators and victim advocates when contacting victims in older cases and initiating new investigative activities. Under the model launched in March 2012, a criminal investigator would contact a specially-designated victim advocate at HAWC prior to attempting to contact a victim so arrangements could be made for the advocate to communicate with the victim along with the investigator. The investigator and advocate would be available to speak with victims when they were being contacted about their case. The model was based on the idea that advocate involvement would enhance the contact experience for victims, ensure victims would learn about available services and receive support during the criminal justice system process, and increase victim participation with the investigation and prosecution.

This new model did not evolve successfully and the victim advocate was unable to become involved in the process of contacting victims. The advocate did not have office space in HPD headquarters and, thus, collaboration required the advocate to travel to HPD. Oftentimes investigators' and advocate's schedules conflicted and this prohibited collaboration. A close working relationship never developed that would allow barriers, like schedule conflicts and the lack of close communication, to be overcome.

The project working group is currently planning to establish 1) new approaches to involving system and community advocates in investigation processes and 2) a pilot program to test alternative police responses to sexual assault incidents in a sample of HPD divisions. These models seek to improve the rate at which victims participate in investigations and to improve outcomes for victims.

The precise nature of these new approaches has not yet been determined. Prior to deciding upon the final details of these interventions it will be valuable to understand investigators' and prosecutors' perspectives on working with victim advocates. This information may be useful because it can identify barriers and contexts that must be overcome for the model to succeed. In addition, this information may determine strengths that can be capitalized on. Consistent with the action-research approach, this report provides this information and offers recommendations for the new model of advocates' involvement.

METHODS

Data were collected from HPD sex crime investigators and prosecutors in the Harris County District Attorney's Office (HCDAO) during the early phases of the project. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 44 HPD personnel in the sex crimes investigative units during the spring and summer of 2011 and survey data were collected from 38 prosecutors in the winter of 2011. Details about the methods used to collect these data are listed in the Appendix. The results summarized below are based on responses to several interview and survey items that asked about collaborating with victim advocates and items that evoked responses pertinent to responsibilities that advocates might have under new project initiatives.

FINDINGS

PROSECUTORS

Advocates' role in the prosecution of sexual assaults

HCDAO prosecutors view victim advocates positively. Approximately half of the prosecutors (n = 18) who responded to the survey indicated that advocates are important, helpful, or excellent.² Six prosecutors specifically noted the importance of advocates in child-victim cases. Some prosecutors indicated that advocates from Children's Court Services are especially good; advocates help children navigate the process and cope with the trauma of testifying.

Prosecutors listed several advocate roles that established their value for the system. The most commonly described (by 19 prosecutors) role was providing victims with emotional support and reducing their stress during the criminal justice system processes. More specifically, prosecutors reported that advocates help victims understand court processes, they help prepare victims for trial,

² Only one respondent indicated that advocates provide little to no assistance.

and they are available for victims when prosecutors are not available. One prosecutor observed that “[Advocates are] very helpful in providing emotional support to the victim during the process. They allow the prosecutor to focus on prosecuting the case.” The last portion of this response was echoed by another prosecutor: advocates’ work allows prosecutors to focus on their responsibilities.

The next most common role that prosecutors described was that of a liaison. According to prosecutors, this entails communicating with victims, helping to coordinate meetings and appointments, assisting victims with court appearances, and keeping victims posted about the legal process. One prosecutor wrote:

“Children’s Court Services (for child cases) and the DA’s Office Victim Witness Division (for adult cases) do an excellent job of guiding victims through the pre-trial / trial process by keeping in constant contact with them and making sure they understand each step along the way.”

One prosecutor observed that “[Advocates are] very helpful in providing emotional support to the victim during the process. They allow the prosecutor to focus on prosecuting the case.”

A few isolated responses did not fit into broader thematic categories and were not provided frequently. One response indicated that advocates are helpful in approaching victims when a long time has elapsed since the crime; another reported that advocates are helpful in accompanying victims through the criminal justice process; one reported that advocates are not very helpful; and a final comment indicated that advocates help get victims into therapy.

Ways advocates might improve the prosecution of sexual assault cases

The most common response was that there are no improvements needed because advocates with whom prosecutors are familiar are doing invaluable work (n = 13). As indicated above, some prosecutors made special mention of the strong work advocates do in child-victim cases. Two prosecutors indicated that they had never worked with advocates in adult cases or were unaware of advocates being involved in adult cases. Four respondents indicated a desire for more advocates (i.e., involving an advocate involved in every case and in more adult cases, and more advocates or staff who are fluent in Spanish). Three prosecutors noted that advocates should provide support for victims and focus on victims’ needs. Two additional prosecutors indicated that advocates should focus on the victim’s needs and not become overly involved in the prosecution.

The remaining responses are not easily captured in broad themes because they cover a range of recommendations. These recommendations include the following, which might be important to consider when designing roles for new advocates within the action- research project: provide support for the victim and help create support structures, help prepare victims for trial, meet one-on-one with victims, communicate more with victims and stay in contact throughout the case, describe court settings to victims, follow through to the trial phase with victims, and help victims understand plea bargains. One prosecutor indicated a degree of skepticism about advocates' roles and indicated that "no one needs to be encouraged to prosecute a rape case."

Overcoming challenges victims face

Two additional survey items may be relevant to understanding how advocates' roles in new initiatives can be maximized. These items asked about the challenges victims face when working with prosecutors and what can be done to reduce these challenges. Prosecutors felt one of the biggest challenges victims face is the negative emotional response associated with following through with the case. Prosecutors indicated that victims fear they will not be believed, fear the judgments of others and testifying in front of strangers, and face the challenge of re-telling their stories and reliving the crime multiple times.

Prosecutors also noted that elements of court processes present challenges for victims. Several prosecutors noted that the process takes a long time and one prosecutor observed that victims feel a lack of control over the timeline. In addition, six prosecutors noted that different prosecutors may work on a single case and this can be problematic for victims. One explained that changing prosecutors is the result of lengthy case processing times. Another indicated that changing prosecutors makes it difficult for the victim to develop trust and become comfortable with the prosecutor. Finally, prosecutors reported that a lack understanding the nature of court proceedings creates challenges. Specifically, they reported that challenges for victims include understanding burden of proof, having expectations about sentencing, comprehending what they are up against in court, and understanding that the defendant has rights. Some remaining, isolated comments indicated that victims do not have the time necessary to participate in the court process and that prosecutors are unable to maintain sufficient contact with victims.

When asked what might reduce the challenges victims face, twelve prosecutors emphasized improved communication between victims and prosecutors. One prosecutor recommended the need to "communicate as regularly as possible (victim advocate helps here)." Another reported: "encourage victims to use e-mail to communicate and tell them to be patient, all calls will be returned. Victims have to trust us that we're always here for them." A third prosecutor reported: "Prep them for what will happen in court." Three of the twelve prosecutors placed an emphasis on educating victim about the process.

Prosecutors also reported that changing court structures and adding resources could reduce challenges for victims. Prosecutors noted that increasing the number of prosecutors, utilizing specialized prosecutors, increasing priorities for sexual assaults, and working to reduce the sizes of court dockets could all be beneficial. Additional, isolated comments mentioned the following as ways to reduce challenges for victims: faster DNA results, better criminal investigations, the need to be more caring towards victims, more counseling for victims, and the need for victims to view prosecutors as lawyers not counselors. Five prosecutors specifically mentioned that that victim advocates can offer assistance in general and with communication.

INVESTIGATORS

Collaborating with advocates when contacting victims in cold cases

The HPD crime lab is working to screen and test rape kits that were not submitted for analysis at the time of the original investigation. A potential result from this screening and testing is that older sexual assault cases will require new investigative work and victim re-contact. The CODIS database is expected to continue producing new leads in older cases and in some instances it may be necessary to contact victims several years after the crime. Investigators were asked if it would be helpful to get advice from advocates or collaborate with advocates when contacting victims in cold cases. Responses were categorized as 1) indicating it would be helpful, 2) providing moderate support for the idea, 3) reporting a degree of uncertainty about whether it would be helpful, and 4) indicating that it would not be helpful or that advocates should not be involved in this process. Responses to this question revealed important differences between investigators in the adult and juvenile units.

Only two adult investigators believed that advocate involvement would be helpful and none offered moderate support for this idea. In contrast, 22 investigators from the juvenile unit indicated that getting advice from or collaborating with advocates when contacting victims in cold cases would be helpful (n = 12), or offered moderate support for this idea (n = 10). Seven adult investigators and five juvenile investigators did not believe advocate involvement would be helpful. Two adult investigators and four juvenile investigators were unsure about whether it is a good idea to involve advocates in the process of contacting victims in cold cases. Investigators were asked to explain why they believed advocate involvement would or would not be helpful and the results are described below.

These investigators indicated that victims sometimes feel comfortable talking to different people, advocates help build rapport with victims, advocates can help explain the process to victims, and that advocates are compassionate and have a softer touch.

Enhanced communication. Seven juvenile investigators offered explanations that emphasized elements of communication, both substance and style. These investigators indicated that victims sometimes feel comfortable talking to different people, advocates help build rapport with victims, advocates can help explain the process to victims, and that advocates are compassionate and have a softer touch.

Provide assistance through court proceedings. Five juvenile investigators indicated that advocates can be helpful because they can accompany victims through court proceedings (not only the investigation process). An investigator said “...I know that the advocacy groups guide the children through the system. They have a closer relationship with them because they are with them through the whole process from beginning to end.”

Advocates can be helpful after the investigation has started. One adult investigator and four juvenile investigators noted that advocates can be helpful after the initial contact. One investigator indicated that “...They should be involved after the investigation...” and another noted “I think that the contact of an initial investigator would be the best way to approach it. Maybe they [the advocate] could play a role later on, but it would create too much pressure on the victim to bring them in right off.”

Provide support for the victim and family. Finally, three adult investigators and two juvenile investigators commented that advocates provide support for victims and their families. One reported that “...these groups are crucial in support for the victim and support for the victim’s family.” Another offered cautious support for the idea of involving advocates when contacting victims: “I haven’t had many dealings with them [advocates] so I don’t know if that would help them [victims] out very much. It might be nice for them to have someone to talk to about it though.”

Additional benefits. Investigators provided other reasons why advocate involvement might be helpful that did not fit into broader categories. One investigator indicated that advocates understand victimization better than investigators; two investigators suggested that advocate involvement can help reduce some work tasks for investigators; one investigator implied that because investigators have multiple roles during an investigation and advocates have one role, advocates may be able to provide better services for victims. It is important to note that 23 investigators did not offer specific reasons to explain why advocate involvement would be beneficial.

Over-involvement. Investigators also offered some reasons why it may *not* be beneficial to involve advocates in the process of contacting victims. One frequently cited reason (by 7 investigators) centered on the idea that investigators have responsibility for conducting investigations and advocates may become overly involved. For example, an investigator reported that “...an advocate’s job is different than ours, we do the criminal side...The objective of the advocate is to help the victim, not to investigate.” Another indicated that “I haven’t had to deal with them currently, but it seems like they

play too much of a role in the investigation.” Finally, another said “...these officers here are in control of the investigation and we like to do that ourselves.”

Different/conflicting objectives. Related to the idea of “over-involvement,” four investigators made comments to suggest that advocates and investigators have different objectives and this is why advocate involvement may not be beneficial. One investigator reported that “Their [advocates’] job is to make the complainant feel better at that moment by telling them that they need to deal with themselves and not worry about our objectives.”

Unbalanced approaches. Comments from four investigators suggested that advocate involvement is not beneficial because accurate information is not always communicated to victims and investigators’ objectives are undermined. One reported that “...They [advocates] have an agenda and take the woman’s side immediately. And they [victims] don’t need to be coerced into reporting.” Another noted that “...They [advocates] lead the woman to believe things that aren’t true. They [advocates] tell them that the suspect will get charged if they follow through with the case, but if they don’t want to go through with it they don’t have to.”

Additional concerns. Investigators raised concerns about advocate involvement that were not captured in the broader themes described above. One investigator noted that contacting victims does not tend to open old wounds, so advocate involvement is not necessary. Another expressed concern about the potential for leaking information about cases. One investigator reported that advocates do not necessarily follow through with victims to the court stages and this has a detrimental impact on victims. Similar to what was noted above, it is important to observe that many investigators did not offer reasons why advocate involvement would not be helpful.

Limiting the negative impact of victimization and reporting

Interviewers also asked investigators about the role that advocates, like the HAWC and HPD advocates, can play in reducing the challenges associated with victimization and with reporting the crime. Investigators from the adult sex crimes unit offered mixed perspectives. Five adult investigators indicated that advocates can be helpful in general ways or help victims through the criminal justice system process. For example, one indicated “They are great. They help the victims when going through the process.” Another indicated “I have great success with HAWC. I’ve had victims call here who have not reported. They want to know what would happen if they report. This happens somewhat frequently. I refer them to HAWC.”

Four adult investigators offered less optimistic appraisals about the extent to which advocates can limit the negative impact of victimization and reporting. Two referred to the role conflicts that exist between investigators and advocates, one observed that advocates do not serve as good liaisons

between victims and police, and the last indicated that advocates would not be helpful to complainants or to prosecuting the case.

Investigators from the juvenile sex crimes unit offered somewhat more positive views than investigators from the adult unit, which likely results from differences in how advocates currently work with juvenile and child victims. Many investigators (n = 16) indicated that advocates can and do aid the victim and family members through good communication, help them to navigate the court process, accompany them in court, and serve as a liaison between the victim and the justice system.

Other investigators noted the limitations about what advocates can do to overcome the challenges of victimization and reporting. One observed that “There are certain victims that will report and others that are afraid or they don’t want the ridicule or embarrassment. So you can counsel them but they just aren’t going to come forward.” Four investigators indicated they had not worked with HAWC or HPD advocates or did not know advocates from these organizations. Two suggested that advocates should become involved after investigators have interviewed victims or later in the criminal justice system process. One investigator indicated that it is up to the victim to accept services and another reported that there is not much advocates can do to aid reporting.

Perceptions of collaborating with advocates

An analysis of responses to interview items also revealed insights into investigators’ perceptions of collaborating with victim advocates. As indicated above, this information may help inform new models that seek to bring about closer collaborations between advocates and investigations. Several investigators mentioned that victim advocates possess unique skills that may help investigations. One of the most frequently mentioned skills was communication. In addition, investigators indicated that advocates have the ability to provide support for victims and families. A few investigators suggested that support translates into greater degrees of victim cooperation with the criminal justice process. These are two advocate strengths (communication and support) that can be built upon.

It is interesting to note that investigators offered mixed views on the role for advocates. Some indicated that a greater degree of advocate involvement is desirable and others noted that advocates’ roles should be limited so as to not interfere with investigations. New approaches to integrating advocates and investigators

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should consider these mixed views that investigators hold. It may be necessary to clearly define advocate roles and ensure these roles are understood by all individuals involved. A new model should be sensitive to these views.

Finally, responses revealed investigators' concerns about role conflicts and about advocates' influence on victims. Some investigators believed that their objectives and those of the advocates were sometimes in conflict. As indicated above, interventions that seek to improve collaborations between investigators and advocates should incorporate elements to ensure that these perceptions about role conflicts do not have detrimental effects on the intervention. It is also important to recognize that several investigators expressed positive views about advocates' services and their working relationship with advocates. This suggests that it is possible to create close, productive working relations between investigators and advocates. The positive views were expressed most frequently by investigators in the juvenile unit. When new interventions are designed it will be worthwhile to learn more about the way advocates and juvenile investigators collaborate, including the organizational structures that facilitate their working relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CAREFULLY PLAN THE NEW MODEL(S)

Prosecutors and investigators perceive that collaborating with advocates in sexual assault cases is positive. This supports the project working group's plans to 1) enhance collaborations between investigators from the adult sex crimes unit, HPD victim advocates, and community advocates and 2) test new models of responding to sexual assaults in a sample of HPD divisions. Yet these new models of greater advocate involvement must be carefully planned because prosecutors and investigators also identified challenges associated with collaborating with victim advocates. These challenges represent potential barriers that may limit positive results. New models must include components, such as training and clear task descriptions, that seek to overcome some of the existing barriers. Designing and launching new interventions without understanding and responding to barriers may be setting the stage for failure.

➔ **Houston Police Department Response**

Members of the multi-disciplinary project group engaged in discussions about the various forms a new advocate position might take. HPD made the decision to use project funds to create a new Justice Advocate position within the adult sex crimes investigative unit and hire an advocate on a temporary basis (because project funds were limited). In spring 2014 HPD made the Justice Advocate a permanent position.

CLEARLY DEFINE ROLES AND OBJECTIVES

Interviews with investigators revealed two important concerns about collaborating with victim advocates. First, there are important differences in their roles and objectives and second, advocates may not understand the investigator's responsibilities. It is also important to note that the interview responses suggest that adult investigators may not understand the potentially valuable outcomes that can result from closer collaboration with victim advocates. Specifically, investigators frequently reported that advocates should not be involved in contacting victims. If this is an element of a new model of collaboration between advocates and adult investigators then the value of this approach must be articulated clearly to the individuals involved. If investigators do not understand the reasons why new interventions are being created then they may be less supportive of new models and less willing to participate fully.

To overcome these concerns it will be important to 1) describe the rationale behind the new model(s) and 2) provide clear descriptions of the roles that system advocates, community advocates, investigators, and prosecutors will play. These descriptions should be aimed at all parties affected by new approaches so they will understand the rationale, objectives, and the roles for individuals in the new models. For instance, interview data suggest that investigators believe advocates may not understand the investigators' responsibilities. At the same time, investigators may not understand that advocate involvement may improve victim cooperation and reduce the time spent soliciting this cooperation. Cross training for advocates, investigators, and prosecutors on new models of advocate involvement may help ensure these groups understand the overall objectives and each other's roles and responsibilities.

→ **Houston Police Department Response**

HPD carefully planned the new position and created a clear job description.

BUILD COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Prosecutors and investigators perceive that advocates improve communication with victims and their families. Improved communication, in terms of both style and substance, was frequently mentioned as a strength that advocates bring to collaborations. Several prosecutors and some investigators mentioned that enhanced communication between advocates and victims can reduce the challenges victims face when proceeding through the court processes. More specifically, advocates can help explain what court processes entail, what will be expected from victims, and that the accused has rights in court. Investigators also frequently mentioned elements of communication when asked how victim advocates can help reduce the negative aspects of victimization and reporting. Investigators discussed aspects of communication when they explained why it would be helpful for

advocates to be involved in contacting victims. Prosecutors indicated that one important challenge that victims face is the multiple prosecutors with whom they must work because court processes take a long time. Working with several prosecutors makes it difficult for victims to develop trust and comfort with the prosecutor. Greater advocate involvement and enhanced communication with the victim may reduce such problems for victims.

Thus, new models should emphasize and build upon the fact that investigators and prosecutors believe advocates possess strong communication skills and can maintain close communication with victims. Enhanced communication between victims, advocates, and the criminal justice system may help reduce the negative impact that participating in the criminal justice process has on victims and enhance victim cooperation with investigators and prosecutors.

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➔ **Houston Police Department Response**

The creation of the Justice Advocate position allowed HPD to build a more trusting relationship with victims of sexual assault. This was accomplished when victims who met with the Justice Advocate realized that the intervention of an unbiased advocate meant that HPD cared for the needs of the victims and a genuine concern for their welfare was exhibited on the part of the HPD. The return on this interaction was a stronger bond with investigators and a more positive experience with law enforcement.

EMPHASIZE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

Prosecutors and investigators frequently observed that advocate involvement is beneficial because they provide crucial support for victims and families. This is especially significant because several prosecutors indicated that one of the biggest challenges victims face is the negative emotional response associated with following through with their case. Prosecutors indicated that victims fear they won't be believed, fear the judgments of others, and face the challenge of re-telling their stories and reliving the crime multiple times. Improved support for victims through this process may lead to significant, positive outcomes for victims. Again, this may also translate into positive outcomes in the justice system.

This element of support, along with enhanced communication, should be featured in new models of advocate involvement. As noted above, it will be important to describe to the parties involved that one important objective of new models of system and community advocate involvement with

investigations is to improve support for victims and families. This, in turn, may also improve victim participation in the criminal justice process.

→ **Houston Police Department Response**

The Justice Advocate emphasized resources available to victims while giving them a chance to heal from their experience. The Justice Advocate place an emphasis on the needs of the victim during and after the investigation.

CAPITALIZE ON THE SUCCESSES NOTED BY JUVENILE SEX CRIMES INVESTIGATORS

Juvenile investigators provided opinions about advocates that differed from investigators in the adult unit. Overall, juvenile investigators offered more positive assessments and offered more reasons why advocate involvement is helpful. It may be worthwhile to capitalize on the experiences of juvenile investigators by getting their input when designing new models of advocate involvement. It might also be worthwhile to learn about the organizational structure that exists in the juvenile unit that facilitates advocate involvement. While it may not be possible to replicate this model in adult-victim cases, this process may spark new ideas about how to design the new approaches.

→ **Houston Police Department Response**

Investigators in the juvenile sex crimes unit were involved in all aspects of creating the new justice advocate position.

APPENDIX

PROSECUTOR SURVEY DATA

With the assistance of a bureau chief in the HCDAO, surveys were distributed to 45 prosecutors known to have experience working sexual assault cases. Of the surveys distributed, 35 were returned and analyzed. The survey instrument was designed by the SHSU research team and the HCDAO bureau chief who distributed and collected surveys. Prosecutors were asked the following questions about collaborating with advocates: 1) Please describe the role that victim advocates play in the prosecution of sexual assaults; 2) How might victim advocates improve the prosecution of sexual assault cases? Is there a different role they can play to improve the prosecution process; 3) In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by victims when working with prosecutors on sexual assault cases; and 4) What can be done to reduce these challenges that victims face?

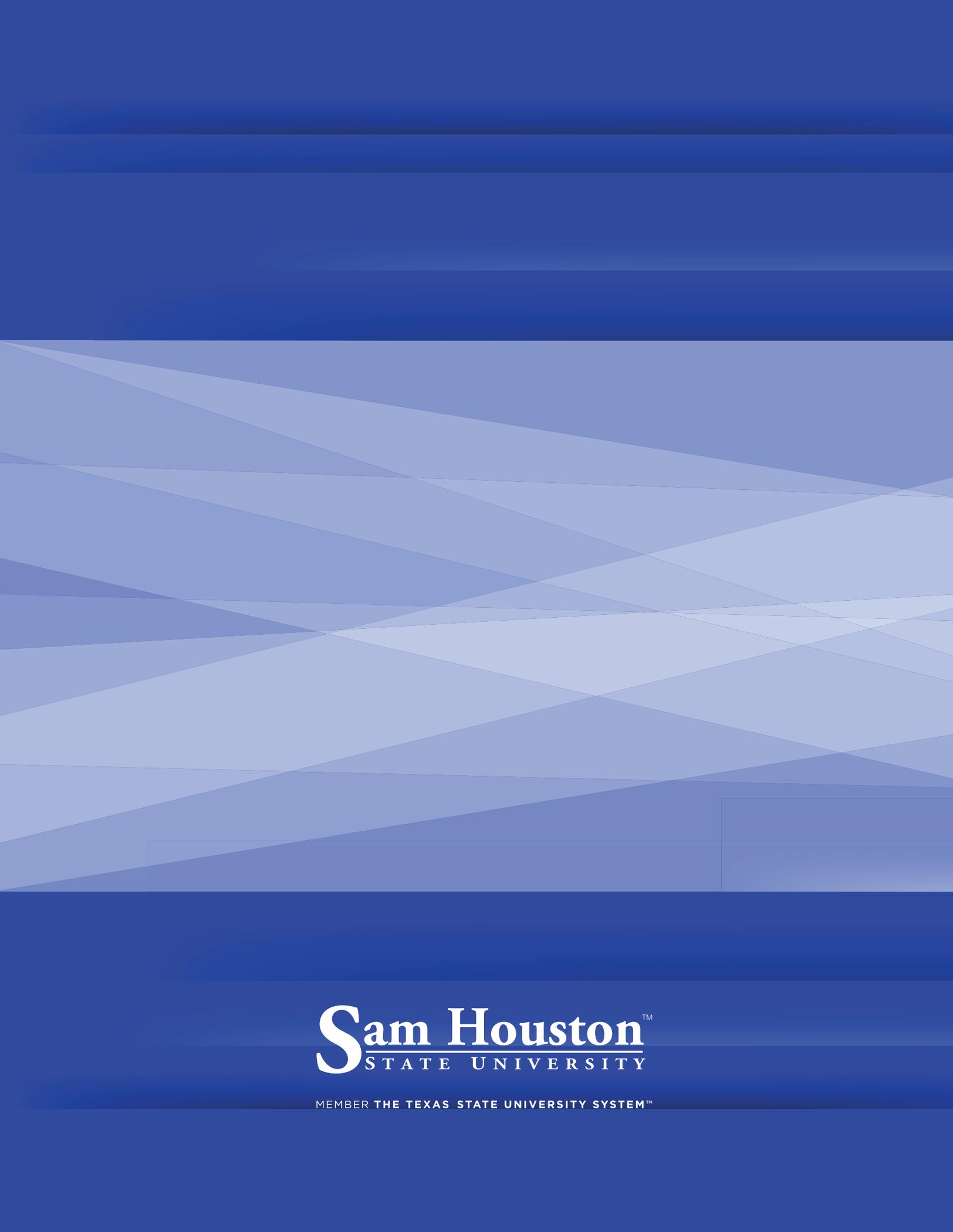
The results presented in this report are based on a qualitative analysis of relevant survey items. The second author read the responses to the survey items examined for this report, developed themes to summarize responses, and then used the themes to code the responses. The first author then examined the themes and used them to code the survey responses. The first and second authors then identified discrepancies and resolved differences.

INVESTIGATOR INTERVIEW DATA

Interviews were completed with 44 HPD sex crimes investigators beginning May 17, 2011 and ending August 23, 2011. The sample of investigators is comprised of 13 members of the Adult Sex Crimes Unit and 31 members of the Juvenile Sex Crimes Unit. Interviews were conducted by four researchers from the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University (SHSU). Investigators from the adult unit were interviewed at HPD headquarters, while interviews with investigators from the juvenile unit were conducted at HPD's Mykawa Station. Interviews were guided by a protocol developed with input from representatives of both sex crimes units. Adult and juvenile sex crimes investigators were asked the following questions pertinent to collaborating with victim advocates: Do you think that advice/collaboration with a victim advocate would be helpful to this process (of contacting victims in cold cases so you can work on their case again)?; and 2) What role should victim advocates, like the Houston Area Women's Center or HPD victim advocates, play in decreasing the difficulties for victims associated with sexual assault victimization and with reporting?

The results presented here are based on a qualitative analysis of the two interview items. Two authors of the report read through interview responses and independently identified main themes. The first author then created a coding system to summarize responses and coded the interview data. The third author then used the coding scheme and also coded the data. The first author reviewed

discrepancies and made a final decision about how to code the responses in which there were differences. The third author identified main themes that emerged from both interview items that were examined. These main themes are described in the report.



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