

AGENDA PLACEMENT FORM

(Submission Deadline – Monday, 5:00 PM before Regular Court Meetings)

Date: _____

Meeting Date: 12/11/2023

Submitted By: County Judge's Office

Department: _____

Signature of Elected Official/Department Head:

Court Decision: <small>This section to be completed by County Judge's Office</small>
<p>COMMISSIONERS COURT</p> <p>DEC 11 2023</p> <p>Acknowledged</p>

Description:

Acknowledgement of the Johnson and Somervell County Sexual Assault
Response Team (SART) Biennial Report 2023-Sheriff's Office

(May attach additional sheets if necessary)

Person to Present: _____

(Presenter must be present for the item unless the item is on the Consent Agenda)

Supporting Documentation: (check one) PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

(PUBLIC documentation may be made available to the public prior to the Meeting)

Estimated Length of Presentation: _____ minutes

Session Requested: (check one)

Action Item Consent Workshop Executive Other _____

Check All Departments That Have Been Notified:

County Attorney IT Purchasing Auditor
 Personnel Public Works Facilities Management

Other Department/Official (list) _____

**Please List All External Persons Who Need a Copy of Signed Documents
In Your Submission Email**



**Johnson & Somervell County
Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)
Biennial Report 2023**

Submitted by:

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Johnson County Family Crisis Center

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Executive Summary

Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) are multidisciplinary collaborative bodies that bring together different groups that address sexual assault (e.g., advocates, medical/forensic examiners, police, prosecutors, and others) in order to work together to improve their community's response to sexual assault victims and cases.

Our SART works to minimize the trauma for sexual assault victims when they seek medical and legal assistance. Through coordination during the investigation process, a SART seeks to reduce repeated questioning of the victim and increase effective collection and preservation of evidence.

SARTs goals have expanded to achieve justice and enhance community safety including, but not limited to, criminal prosecution.

The main activities of SART are to:

- Increase intra-agency and interagency collaboration and coordination when responding to sexual assault,
- Identify inadequacies and limitations in and among systems,
- Ensure appropriate, trauma-informed responses to support victims, and survivors,
- Improve offender accountability.
- Quarterly meetings to ensure protocol procedures and discuss case reviews.

SART has been faced with many challenges to balance the laws, mandates, power, and goals of each member organization with the mission of the team. The SART has faced difficulties in developing a consistent team due to additional responsibilities of team members, turnover, lack of attendance and inconsistency around orientation and training. The SART team has been planning new ways to address these challenges to better the collaboration and effectiveness of the meetings.

Aside from the challenges, the SART has made a positive impact in service provision. The relationships that develop during meetings, the standards developed in protocols, and the practice team members acquire by resolving interagency conflict leads to a better outcome for victims.

The SART members will continue to work to coordinate services around victims' experiences to remove barriers and increase services and supports for victims.

SART Overview

Johnson and Somervell County established a working agreement that is recognized as a cooperative collaborative commitment between participating agencies. This agreement is proof of commitment as acknowledged by the signature of each agency representative. All parties enter this collaborative working agreement voluntarily to better serve the needs of sexual assault victims, including sex trafficking, in Johnson and Somervell Counties and surrounding communities. The agreement is not legally binding and may be amended at any time in writing and by mutual consent of the parties. Any party to the Agreement may withdraw from the Agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice; however, the withdrawal of any party will not result in the nullification of the Agreement nor of any part of the Agreement as a new representative will be appointed.

Vision: To create an environment in Johnson County and Somervell County, Texas where survivors of sexual assault are heard, and healing is promoted, and offenders of those crimes are held accountable.

Mission: The Johnson and Somervell County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is dedicated to enhancing the multidisciplinary response by those charged with responding to sexual assaults of adult and adolescent individuals, equipped by a standardized plan of action, with the goal to comprehensively investigate sexual assault crimes and to promote healing and justice for survivors.

Members: Johnson County and Somervell SART team is comprised of the individual or their designee from the following departments:

- Johnson County Family Crisis Center/Sexual Assault Program
- Johnson and Somervell County Prosecutor/District Attorney
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Health Provider
- Johnson County Sheriff's Department
- Somervell County Sheriff's Department
- City of Burleson
- Mental/Behavioral Health Provider
- Law Enforcement
- Any additional members considered necessary

Outline of Activities and Trainings

Johnson and Somervell County SART has been faced with many challenges with staff turnover between the agencies. Although turnover has created a barrier in planning a formal training pertaining the dynamics of sexual assault, SANE exams, track-it system, or effects. We have not lost sight of our team's purpose.

Johnson and Somervell County have still made strides towards making a more fluid and trauma informed care approach for the survivors and their families. Since establishing a SART team we have made face to face connections with the frontline workers in each department of the SART team members. We have spent numerous hours getting to know and understand how each individual agency interacts and serves survivors. Getting a better understanding of the role each community partner plays has created a smoother intersection when it comes to sexual assault cases.

In this time our members have actively participated in quarterly meetings throughout the year. During these meetings we have visited the Johnson County Family Crisis Center and the Johnson County Court house where the District Attorney's office is held. While the SART was at the Johnson County Family Crisis Center, the former Program Director, DeAnne Derrick, presented and handed out a packet to each member on information for adult survivors of sexual assault. This packet included the break down on the effects a survivor might feel, how to report the assault, process of healing, steps to evidence collection, information on how to apply for a protective order, information on stalking, Crime Victims Compensation, and numerous other local and state resources. This packet is also included in the survivor's resource kit they receive at the hospital when getting a forensic exam.

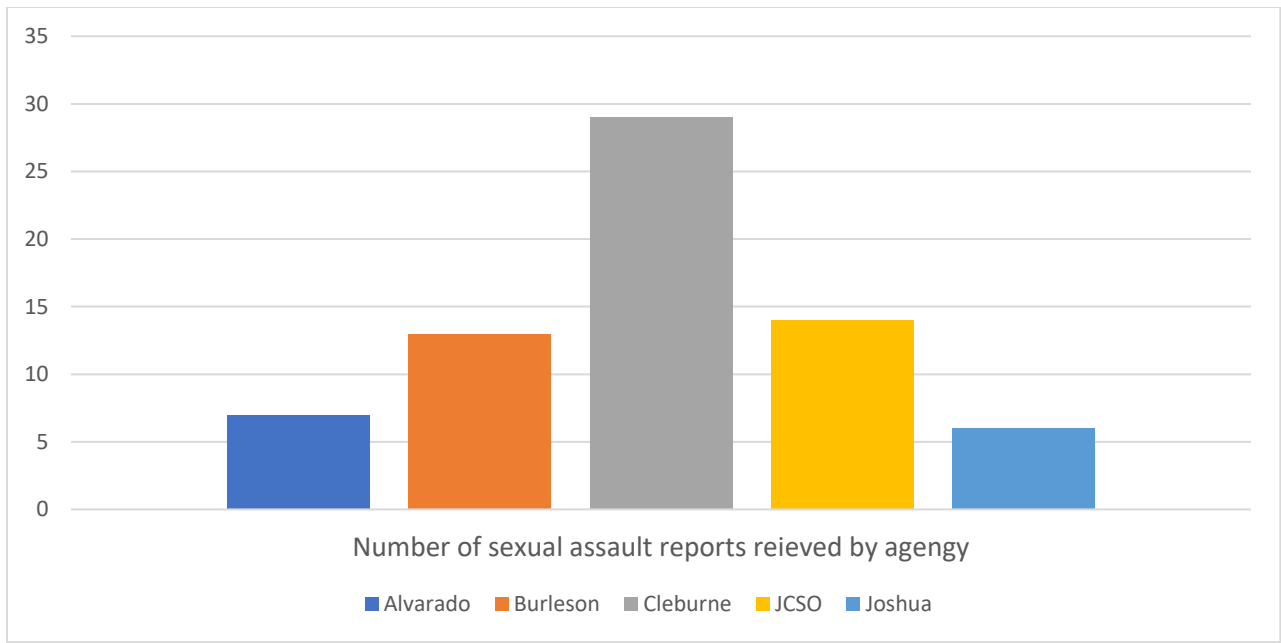
Members also worked diligently on creating protocols that are reflective on the day-to-day practices of the team. Team members worked collaboratively on establishing each partner agencies procedures when they are presented with a sexual assault outcry. The written protocol is designed to document how the various partner agencies individually respond and work together to coordinate the intervention, treatment, investigation and prosecution efforts for adult sexual assault cases.

Establishing protocols was a tedious and timely undertaking. The purpose of the written protocols is to ensure coordination between all agencies involved in sexual assault cases, to increase the efficiency of response, and to minimize survivor traumatization. Having the protocols in place has already shown to be beneficial as we navigate through staff turnover.

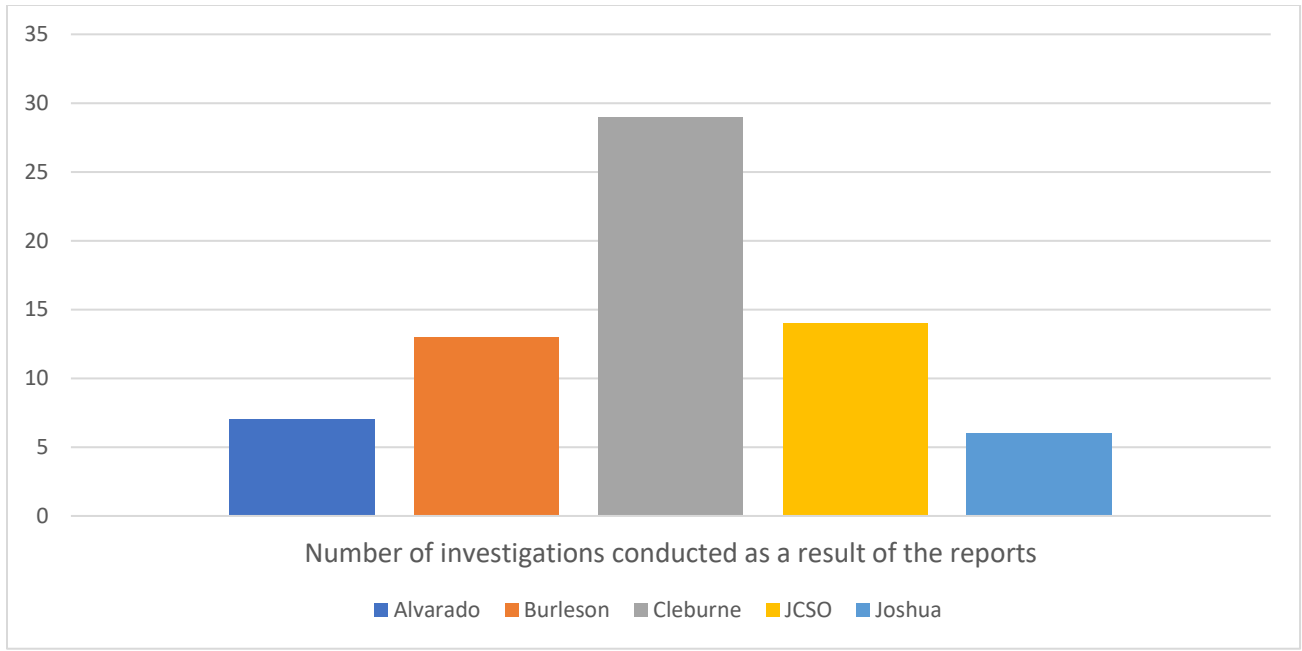
As we look forward into the next biennium, the SART team has started planning a formal training that will reach the requirements for our law enforcement under the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) hours and standards.

Data and Findings

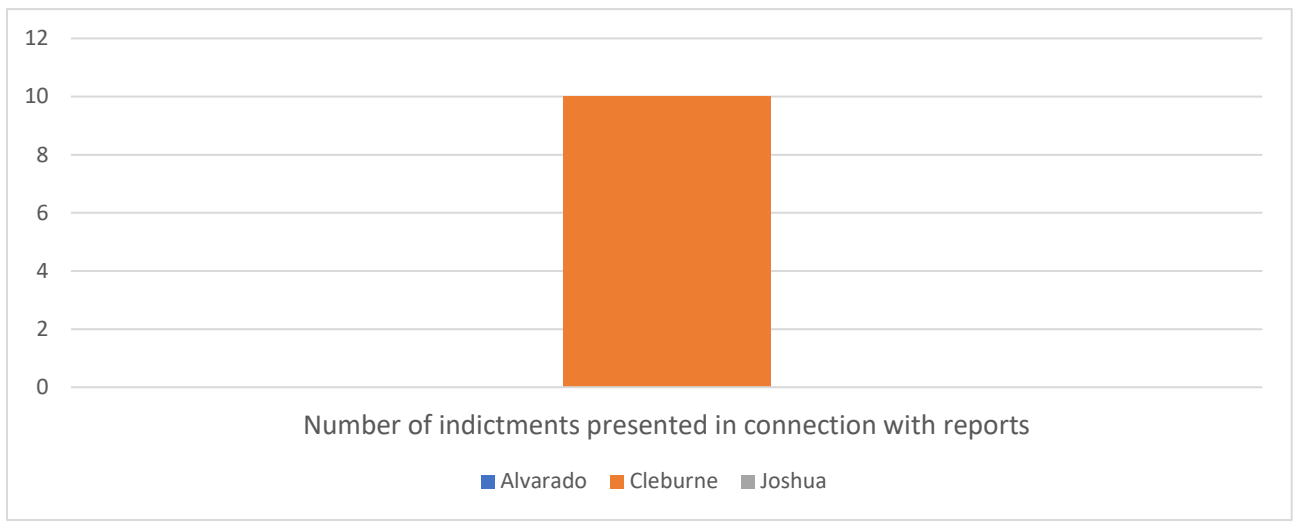
Johnson and Somervell County SART built a secure excel spreadsheet using Microsoft SharePoint. Creating the link was done with extreme caution to make sure that it will remain secure and the confidentiality of the victim/survivor will not be breeched. Over the last few months, we have got it up and running. At our next quarterly meeting we will present a training to the team members on how to input data. Due to just getting our own data tracking system established we have limited data collected from each department. In the next biennium, we are hoping that all departments and team members will be fluent in using the SharePoint link.



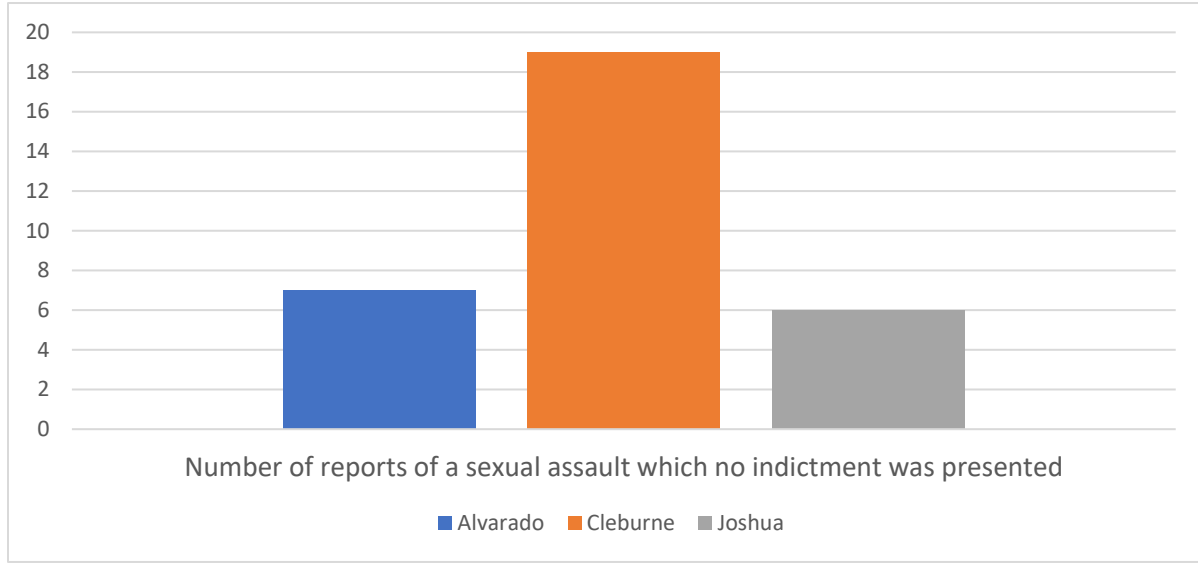
Reported numbers are as follows: Alvarado-7, Burleson-13, Cleburne-29, JCSO-14, and Joshua-6. Numbers shown for Burleson and Johnson County Sheriff's Department were provide by Texas Health SANE Department from reported adult sexual assaults that sought medical attention/SANE exam. Godley, Grandview, Johnson County District Attorney, Keene, Rio Vista, Somervell, Glenrose, and Venus numbers were not submitted by the departments.



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Reported numbers are as follows: Alvarado-0, Cleburne-10, and Joshua-0. Burleson, Godley, Grandview, Johnson County Sheriff’s Department, Johnson County District Attorney, Keene, Rio Vista, Somervell, Glenrose, and Venus numbers were not submitted by the departments.



Reported numbers are as follows: Alvarado-7, Cleburne-19, and Joshua-6. Burleson, Godley, Grandview, Johnson County Sheriff's Department, Johnson County District Attorney, Keene, Rio Vista, Somervell, Glenrose, and Venus numbers were not submitted by the departments.

Number of indictments shows a drastic drop in numbers. The reason for this varies from case to case.

Reasons departments reported the decrease were:

- Some reports are currently still active
- They have been suspended due to uncooperative victim
- Prosecution declined due to insufficient evidence
- Victim unable to assist with furthering Investigations (unsigned prosecution paperwork, mental health, unable to make contact with victim)

SART Protocols

Protocols are policies, procedures, and agreements to guide the team in collective response. Protocols help eliminate gaps while defining roles and partnerships. By doing so, this helps support the SART in maintaining consistent, high quality, and survivor-centered responses in our community for the long term.

Johnson & Somervell County

Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)

Community Cooperative Working Agreement

This working agreement is recognized as a cooperative collaborative commitment between participating agencies. This agreement is proof of commitment as acknowledged by the signature of each agency representative. All parties enter this collaborative working agreement voluntarily to better serve the needs of sexual assault victims, including sex trafficking, in Johnson and Somervell Counties and surrounding communities. The agreement is not legally binding and may be amended at any time in writing and by mutual consent of the parties. Any party to the Agreement may withdraw from the Agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice; however, the withdrawal of any party will not result in the nullification of the Agreement nor of any part of the Agreement as a new representative will be appointed.

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ADVOCACY

- I. The Family Crisis Center agrees to:
 - A. Maintain confidentiality of all references to case specific information.
 - B. Provide administrative oversight of the Johnson and Somervell County SART.

- C. Designate a coordinator to serve as a facilitator for the SART.
- D. Maintain a record of all SART meetings and documents.
- E. Support and provide trained Advocates.
- F. Demonstrate a one-hour response time from time of call received to time advocate arrives to designated healthcare facility.
- G. Instruct advocate to check in upon arrival/departure.
- H. Provide hotline sexual assault victims with appropriate healthcare facility choices for medical assessment and forensic examination when requested.
- I. Utilizing a victim-centered and trauma informed approach, provide information (verbal and written), emotional support and crisis intervention for sexual assault victims and their family members, and/or friends at the hospital. Provide the survivor with the opportunity to be supported by a trained advocate during their investigative interview with law enforcement (HB1172).
- J. If client exhibits behaviors conducive with human sex trafficking, utilize the adult human trafficking screening tool provided by the National Human Trafficking training center and provide appropriate services and referrals.
- K. Provide appropriate referrals and follow up care, consulting with Texas Health Cleburne social worker on any areas of concern.
- L. Provide ongoing data to the SART for evaluation.
- M. Coordinate and participate in SART training activities, as determined, and supported by the SART.
- N. Provide follow-up intervention, counseling and advocacy services for victims and family members as requested.
- O. Collaborate with law enforcement and district attorney to meet clients' needs regarding crime victims' rights, compensation and advocacy throughout investigation and prosecution. Routinely share information among team members and provide information about case status as needed and as allowed by law.
- P. If survivor discloses that multi-age children, elderly, or disabled persons are in the household with the offender, make appropriate reports and collaborate with the Children's Advocacy Center, CPS, and/or APS, as necessary.
- Q. Provide a process for the victim and/or family to receive information regarding crime victims' rights, compensation, and the right to advocacy.

- R. Cooperate with local Law Enforcement to provide appropriate care to victims.

HOSPITAL

- II. Texas Health Methodist Cleburne Hospital agrees to:
 - A. Designate a liaison to serve as a resource person for the SART.
 - B. Participate in SART meetings and SART sponsored training activities.
 - C. Provide the necessary medical stabilization of patient upon presentation to the hospital.
 - D. Determine if the Police have been notified and notify when appropriate.
 - E. Initiate call to the Texas Health Systems SANE Program when a sexual assault patient has arrived.
 - F. Provide an examination room that has adequate space and privacy to conduct Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations.
 - G. Provide appropriate equipment for the use in sexual assault medical forensic exams.
 - H. Provide ongoing feedback, as needed, to the area SART partners.
 - I. Develop a strong working relationship with area resources to strengthen the follow-up potential for patients referred.
 - J. Provide appropriate and healing Community resources when appropriate.
 - K. Provide ongoing process improvement information to the SANE Program Manager and/or SART.
 - L. Maintain confidentiality and integrity of all medical records
 - M. Maintain confidentiality of all references to case specific information.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- III. Law Enforcement Agency Agrees to:
 - A. Designate a liaison for the SART.
 - B. Refer appropriate sexual assault patients to JCFC or other participating Johnson County SAFE facilities medical/forensic treatment.
 - C. Provide on location help to victims, giving them the options for treatment.

- D. When possible, provide comfortable interview location where space permits.
- E. Responding Officer will gather information needed to proceed with report and SANE exam. Follow-up will be conducted by department, as necessary.
- F. Coordinate with the local advocacy program to arrange for an advocate to be present at all investigative interviews should the survivor request such presence.
- G. Offer the survivor with the opportunity to be supported by a trained advocate during their investigative interview with law enforcement (HB1172).
- H. Provide a case number or incident report and signed Law Enforcement Request for Sexual Assault Exam as needed for an approval.
- I. Department staff will provide follow up information and education to discuss with the SART during the monthly meeting. This can be done over Zoom or in person.
- J. Receive forensic evidence that has been collected from the patient and/or suspect for approved forensic exams.
- K. Report back to SANE Program Manager any suggestions from the Crime Lab concerning evidence collection, documentation, or packaging or sealing of the evidence and bring summary of the discussion to the SART.
- L. Follow law enforcement established protocol regarding evidence transmission and storage for approved forensic exams.
- M. Maintain communication and contact with the SART.
- N. Participate in SART training activities that will enhance knowledge of the community at large, Law Enforcement, the District Attorney's staff, SANE or SANE candidates.
- O. Provide data concerning sexual assaults to the SART.
- P. Provide ongoing process improvement information to the SANE Program Manager and/or SART.
- Q. Maintain confidentiality of all references to case specific information.

PROSECUTION

- IV. The District Attorney's Office of Johnson and Somervell County agrees to:

- A. Designate a liaison to serve as a resource person for the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).
- B. Provide ongoing data for cases that have gone to prosecution.
- C. Use Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) as witnesses during sexual assault trials, as needed.
- D. Provide reasonable notification of upcoming trials for SANE or law enforcement who may be called.
- E. Meet with SANE prior to judicial proceedings to review the case.
- F. Maintain communication and contact with the SART and establish method for follow up on disposition of cases.
- G. Participate in SART training activities, including law enforcement officials, other attorneys, and SANE candidates.
- H. Participate in training that will increase SANE's ability to provide clear and defined testimony as an expert witness.
- I. Provide ongoing process improvement information to the SANE Program Manager and/or SART.

SANE

- V. The Texas Health Sexual Assault Nurse Examine (SANE) Program agrees to:
 - A. Designate a liaison serve as a resource person for the SART.
 - B. Participate in SART meetings and SART sponsored training activities.
 - C. Collaborate with advocacy to meet patient/victims needs regarding crime victim's rights, compensation, and advocacy throughout the medical forensic evaluation.
 - D. Ensure that all SANEs responding independently to care for patient/victims are adult/adolescent certified by the Texas Office of the Attorney General or has a national SANE-A certification through the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN).
 - E. Ensure that all SANEs stay current with their Texas Board of Nursing licensure requirements for registered nurses.
 - F. Ensure that all SANEs stay current with requirements of adult/adolescent certification as mandated by the Texas Office of the Attorney General and/or the IAFN.

- G. Ensure SANE(s) provide the patient/victim with the opportunity to be supported by an approved advocate during their medical/forensic experience.
- H. Ensure a one (1) hour response from time of call received to time SANE arrives at the emergency department.
- I. Ensure that patients/victims receive written and verbal explanations of Texas Health and Human Services Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault.
- J. Notify law enforcement agency of patients' arrival to the hospital when appropriate.
- K. Ensure that all SANE staff follow established guidelines and best practices as outlined by the Texas Evidence Collection Protocol to provide consistency in the sexual assault medical forensic examination and evidence collection of patients/victims.
- L. Enter sexual assault kit tracking information into the Texas DPS statewide electronic tracking system Track-Kit as required by Government Code 420.034.
- M. Properly prepare for upcoming judicial proceedings by meeting with the District Attorney's Office to review cases that are pending or in process.
- N. Notify the District Attorney's Office of address and/or telephone number changes.
- O. Attend specialized forensic training specific to the Adult & Adolescent population to maintain current and best practices.
- P. Agrees to meet regularly as a Forensic team to discuss quality of care, peer, and procedural review.
- Q. Provide ongoing process improvement information to the SART
- R. Maintain custody, confidentiality, and integrity of all forensic medical records.
- S. Maintain confidentiality of all references to case specific information.

Evaluation of Protocols: Case Review

Case reviews are one of the mechanisms that SART teams can use to assess and improve the effectiveness of the team's response to adult survivors of sexual assault. Through this last biennium we have had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different professionals and agencies that respond to adult survivors of sexual assault within the community.

Johnson and Somervell County SART was not able to obtain a signed written consent for a case review to be discussed and published. Under *Texas Local Government Code Sec. 351.258 (f)* *A response team may only review a sexual assault case of an adult survivor with the signed, written consent of the survivor.*

As we start into the next biennium, the team is developing a set of guidelines for selecting a case to review along with a standardized release form for the survivor that meets the mandatory requirements.

Conclusion

Reflecting back on the last two years we unveiled many challenges. Turnover throughout the different agencies created gaps in communication, leadership, and role responsibilities. The residing members have worked diligently in filling the gaps to make sure that adult sexual assault survivors rights, confidentiality, safety and well-being remained the primary goal. Community partners and members at no time lost sight our commitment to supporting survivors of sexual assault.

Although Johnson and Somervell County SART still has work to do in building cohesiveness between all departments, we believe that the work done thus far has shown great benefit for everyone involved. Having a multidisciplinary collaborative group of bodies working together to improve our community's response to sexual assault has drastically enhanced the experience and outcome for victims/survivors as they navigate the process. SART has brought awareness to the importance of victim-centered care along with increased teamwork between the agencies.

Johnson and Somervell County SART has started planning a formal training that will reach the requirements for our law enforcement under the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) hours and standards. The team is also developing a set of guidelines for selecting a case to review along with a standardized release form for the survivor that meets the mandatory requirements.

Based on the data we were able to collect, Cleburne Police Department reported the highest number of sexual assaults. All departments that reported showed that all sexual assaults that were reported were investigated.

Coordinating services to victims in a trauma-informed approach so they can heal in a way that makes them feel safe, supported, and secure is our primary mission. We will continue to come together, find common ground, and collaborate to comprehensively investigate sexual assault crimes.