



October 2023  
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# THE TASC CONNECTION



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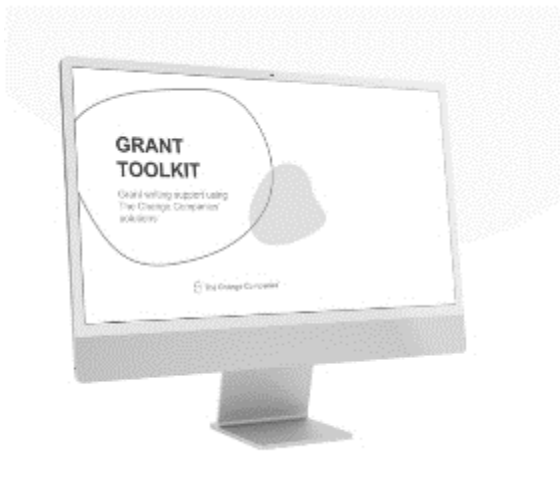
## Back to School!

Summer break has ended. The kids have gone back to school. How has the change impacted families and our treatment programs across the state? Read about youth treatment programs starting on *page 3*.



## It's All About the Money

The ability to create, implement, and continue operating a treatment court can often rely on access to funds. Local fundraising and grants are great ways to make your program experience better. See *page 5* for more information on this topic.



# 2023 – 2024 Board Members



## 2023 Board Retreat

June 29 – 30, 2023

The new slate of directors met in-person for the first time for the Board Retreat on June 29 – 30, 2023, in Houston, following the RISE23 conference. The Council on Recovery in Houston was kind enough to offer space in their building for the retreat and Deborah Keyser and James Stafford, opened their home for a social evening.

During the retreat the members discussed plans for the upcoming year and met with representatives from the Office of Court Administration (OCA) and the Criminal

Justice Division (CJD) of the Governor's Office via zoom. The OCA was approved for two new positions that will be dedicated to meeting OCA's obligations to specialty courts and should be filled this fall.

Outgoing TASC President, Shay Rustam was recognized for her service to the organization. Thank you, Shay!

The Board is looking forward to the next TASC Conference scheduled for Spring 2024. More news coming soon!



# FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

## Travis County FTC Implements Wrap-Around/Care Coordination Services Model

*Story Courtesy of Judge Aurora Martinez-Jones*

During the Spring of 2023, the Travis County Parenting in Recovery/Family Drug Treatment Court (PIR) started implementing the evidence-based Wraparound model. It is not a new model to Travis County, in fact, it has been long utilized by other community programs, including programs that share offices with PIR. For many years, this model has been successfully addressing the needs of kids and families presenting multisystemic involvement: Child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, school systems and social services at large. Training on the process and implementation of the wraparound model has been facilitated mainly by our local trainer within the Travis County Office of Children Services and by the National Wraparound Initiative.

The Wraparound model is understood as a process of service delivery. Not a service, but a method of serving families. Participants in the program and their assigned care coordinator bring their family team to the table on a regular basis to address their challenges, strengths, and needs, including the reasons for their involvement with PIR. These family teams often include not only the child advocates (Child Protective Services worker, CASA advocate and Child's attorney ad litem), but the parent's attorney and any other professionals, family members or friends identified as part of the family support system. Other team members may include the children's and parent's therapists, peer recovery coach, sponsor, and sober house manager.

Under this model, program participants take an active role in their case and in the way their needs are resolved. This collaborative approach is facilitated by the assigned care coordinator so that throughout this process all parties come to partner with the participant, their family and everybody else involved in the case. Important discussions and problem solving occur during these family team meetings with the participant at the center of the conversation. A service plan is developed in collaboration with the participant and all parties involved in the case. This process offers little room for splitting among team members, reduces delays, ensures accountability, and provides collaboration between the participant and the entire family team.

The Wraparound model incorporates 4 different phases: Engagement, Team Preparation, Treatment Plan Development and Implementation, and Transition. This process follows 10 basic principles: Family Voice and Choice, Team Based, Natural Supports, Collaboration, Community Based, Culturally Competent, Individualized, Strength Based, Persistence, and Outcome Based. The new Wraparound Care Coordination team for PIR, includes 3 full-time care coordinators and a program manager with the capacity to serve 45 families at any given time.



## Is your court program registered?

Texas Specialty Court programs must be registered with the Office of Court Administration, See TX Gov't Code Sec. 121.002. To learn more about how to register your program, or which programs are eligible for registration, visit <https://www.txcourts.gov/about-texas-courts/specialty-courts/>. To verify your program has been registered, send inquiry to [SpecialtyCourts@txcourts.gov](mailto:SpecialtyCourts@txcourts.gov).



# Project SAFeR

## A Tarrant County Program

*Story courtesy of Molly Davis; Photo: Courtney Landes, Molly Davis, Jim Davidson*

In 2014, stakeholders in Tarrant County, created Project SAFeR, a diversion program for youth aged 10-12, who are referred to juvenile court for offenses involving problematic sexual behavior.

The program utilizes a multidisciplinary team comprised of law enforcement, child protective services caseworkers, medical providers, treatment providers, prosecutors, juvenile probation officers, and child advocacy center staff to screen every case involving 10–12-year-olds as the alleged perpetrator of an offense involving problematic sexual behavior.

After the screening, law enforcement refers the case to the local juvenile probation department, which fast tracks the intake and referral to the District Attorney's Office. At the same time, the treatment provider assesses the child's risks and needs. The assigned prosecutor reviews the case for legal sufficiency, contacts the victim's family to discuss the diversion program and files the case. The victim's family must consent to the juvenile respondent's participation in the diversion program; if they do not consent, the case proceeds in a traditional prosecution.

The respondent, with counsel from the defense attorney, decides whether to accept the diversion program offer or proceed with traditional prosecution. A juvenile probation officer supervises the respondent during the diversion program, with weekly face-to-face visits. Once the respondent successfully completes the program, the prosecutor dismisses the case. The respondent can apply for sealing two years after the case is dismissed. The child must complete the program before their 13th birthday.

Since 2015, 46 children have been admitted to Project SAFeR, and 42 of them successfully completed the program prior to their 13th birthdays, a 91% success rate.

Questions and inquiries can be directed to:

Jim Davidson, Casework Supervisor, Tarrant County Juvenile Services, [JSDavidson@tarrantcountytx.gov](mailto:JSDavidson@tarrantcountytx.gov)

Molly Davis, Former Tarrant County Juvenile Prosecutor, [molly.davis@txcourts.gov](mailto:molly.davis@txcourts.gov)

Courtney Landes, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Lena Pope, [clandes@lenapope.org](mailto:clandes@lenapope.org)

## *A Better Approach to Diversion, Family Preservation, and Public Safety*

Based on research by Dr. Jane Silovsky and Dr. Barbara Bonner and modeled on a clinical intervention program in Omaha, Nebraska for children with sexual behavior problems, Project SAFeR is a 22-week evidence-based treatment program that combines trauma-informed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, parental involvement, and juvenile court oversight to produce strong outcomes for children with problematic sexual behavior. Both the Children's Group and the Parents' Group meet weekly at treatment provider Lena Pope to learn the sexual behavior rules, coping skills, child development, setting boundaries, abuse prevention, and supervision strategies. Most of the children in Project SAFeR have a co-occurring mental health or behavioral health condition, commonly ADHD, ODD, PTSD, Depression, Anxiety, as well as an array of language and learning delays.

# HOUSTON NEWS

## GRIP Court Highlights

*Story Courtesy of Zack Pratt*

August was action-packed for GRIP ([Gang Recidivism Intervention Program](#)) Court, as they prepared youth and families for a successful return to school. Community partners provided backpacks and school supplies for all participants, while Ztrip transportation services have been confirmed to ensure a smooth commute to and from school. Exciting incentives await compliant participants. These include attending Astros games, fishing outings, and an overnight camping trip, thanks to our partnership with the Mayor's Office of Gang Prevention and Intervention.

Furthermore, the program takes pride in celebrating the accomplishments of three youth who have successfully graduated with their GEDs, and two others who took a significant step towards their career aspirations by enrolling in Barber School. Of note is one remarkable participant who had been accepted into Sam Houston State University and was scheduled to move into his dorm on August 11th.

The FY 2022 statistics highlight the remarkable achievements of the program. According to reports from law enforcement, family, and school resource officers, 75% of GRIP's youth reduced their gang association, and 79% of eligible youth secured employment. Additionally, 45% of eligible youth obtained their diplomas, while 11 youths pursued vocational programs or college after receiving their diplomas. Furthermore, the team is proud to report a one-year recidivism rate of just 14%, highlighting the program's success, particularly given the complexities of the population the team works with. Out of the 64 youths served, 44 participants entered the program with aggravated offenses.

## STAR Court Impact Reaches New Zealand!

*Story Courtesy of Keith Liles*

The Harris County [STAR Drug Court](#) now has a pen pal program located 7,421 miles across the globe in Auckland, New Zealand.

On Thursday, June 22, Judge Dianne Partridge, of the North Shore District Court in Auckland, attended a STAR team staffing and Drug Court Docket to gain insight into how best practices are utilized here in Texas. She was in town to attend the annual National Association of Drug Court Professionals Conference (RISE23).

New Zealand has a population of 5.1 million people, and Judge Partridge is one of six Drug Court Judges that preside over one of only three Drug Courts in the entire country. Comparatively, Harris County boasts a population of 4.7 million with four Drug Courts and four judges.

According to Judge Partridge, "the collaborative pre-court team discussions were interesting and powerful, and it was lovely to witness the authentic interactions between Judge Lacayo and each of the participants, showing the real connection and mutual respect. It is also reassuring to see the effectiveness of these processes so similar to those that I use. The fact that some of the staff volunteer your time is mind-blowing, but a testament to your belief and dedication to this wonderful court."



*Photo:*

*Judge Dianne Partridge of New Zealand Specialty Courts with the Thursday STAR Drug Court Team.*

# FUN-DRAISING SPOTLIGHT

## STAR Court Annual Fundraiser

Story Courtesy of Keith Liles

On August 13, 2023, the [STAR Drug Court](#) Alumni Association held their annual fundraiser and sober social event. Despite Houston's 104-degree temperature, the fun rose to meet the heat as clients, family members and friends of STAR played volleyball, cornhole and enjoyed the treats from a local food truck. They raised just shy of \$2000 for use by the group to assist with community outreach events, hosting both social and service gatherings for the members, and participation in recovery related events in Houston and Texas such as the Big Texas Rally, Soberfest 24 and more.



## Resources

### New & Old, and Ready to Use

#### The Change Companies

Their [Resource Center](#) includes FREE downloads of materials, including their [Grant Toolkit](#).

#### Learn & Engage

The Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center creates opportunities for behavioral health and justice system leaders to learn from and engage with each other on critical topics affecting the state. Learn more [HERE](#).

## Job Postings

### Looking to get involved?

Hays County County Court at Law	Mental Health Court Caseworker
Hays County County Court at Law	Mental Health Court Social Work Intern
Travis County Mental Health Public Defender's Office	Mental Health Public Defender
Travis County Adult Probation	Clinical Mental Health Professional
Travis County Mental Health Public Defender's Office	Social Services Manager
Travis County HHSC	Social Services Program Coordinator
Travis County HHSC	(PT) Social Services Program Specialist
National & Remote Council of State Governments	Director of Reentry Initiatives

DUST OFF YOUR BOOTS  
AND  
SAVE THE DATE FOR

**RISE  
TOX  
2024**

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALTY COURTS  
ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE  
MARCH 26-28, 2024  
THE OMNI FORT WORTH  
1300 HOUSTON STREET | FORT WORTH, TX

# TASC Awards

## 2023 Recipients

The 2023 TASC Award Winners were announced at the annual Membership meeting, April 19, 2023. The board has been delivering the awards and taking photo memories over the past couple of months.

*Congratulations again to all award recipients!*



Photo: Judge Yolanda Huff with Judge Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez and others  
Recipient of the *Judge John C. Creuzot* Award  
Bexar County



Photo: Members of DIVERT Court team with Erin Morgan  
Recipient of the *Judge Ruben G. Reyes* Award  
Dallas County



Photo: Georgia Kimmey with Mary Covington  
Recipient of the *Mary Covington* Award  
Angelina County



Photo: Faith Bowen with Judge Kelli Johnson  
Recipient of the *Joel Bennett Recovery* Award  
Harris County



Photo: Ashlea White  
Recipient of the *Rusty Ladd Scholarship* Award  
Midland County

# RISE23 News

## Fun in the Houston Sun

The RISE23 Conference was held the last week of June in Houston. Several TASC board and general members were presenters this year. Our own Midland County boasts four winners of the Art of Recovery contest.

Help us congratulate the winners:

- 1st place- Poetry- Sandra R.
- 1st place- Painting/Drawing- Brandon F.
- 2nd place- Painting/Drawing- Jesse A.
- 3rd place- Painting Drawing- Sandra R.

RISE24 is scheduled for May 22-25, 2024, in Anaheim, CA.



"This is how my days were and changing my days one day at a time."



"Finding change making better choices from past experiences, learning, bettering oneself, and being free from substance, mental health issues, and just being happy."



"Because its saying thru the darkest moments as in people going through addiction go through a dark phase and if they stay strong enough with the help of support, they will eventually see the light into a better life. The lights on the edge help display that."



"This art reminds me of being in a scary dark road with everything being dead. Until I found the road with life, light, and meaning."



# Upcoming Events

August 30	Webinar	HHSC	Innovation Across Texas' Behavioral Health and the Juvenile Justice Systems
August 31	Webinar	CSG	Medication-Assisted Treatment Services & Community Reentry
September 6	Webinar	NCJFCJ	Immigrant Children and Youth: Special Immigrant Juvenile Classification with a 360-view of the Roles of State Courts, Immigration Courts, & USCIS
September 7	Webinar	CSG	Alternative First Responder Models Can Support Youth in Crisis
September 7	Webinar	HHSC	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders - Impacts, Prevention and Support Strategies
September 9	Houston, TX	HRI	Rally for Recovery
September 28 – 29	Webinar	TFC	Motivational Interviewing & Individualized Service Planning
October 5	Laredo, TX	WCDVC	27 <sup>th</sup> Annual Domestic Violence Conference
October 10	Lubbock, TX	CMIT	Mental Health Training for Jailers
October 18 – 20	Galveston, TX	JCMH	Judicial Summit on Mental Health
November 3 – 4	Houston, TX	NAMI	2023 NAMI Texas Annual Conference
November 15 – 17	College Station, TX	CMIT	TCA 2023 Special Populations Conference

## Judicial Summit

### Note from JCMH

The 6th Annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health will be held October 18-20, 2023, at the Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center in Galveston, Texas. A livestream option is available for those who are not able to attend in person. New in 2023 are extra networking opportunities, breakout sessions with subject matter experts, and a Resource Hall featuring nonprofit and government organizations that can benefit your communities.

This year's [Summit](#) offers a Mental Health Law Legislative Update, a focus on Diversion Centers, a spotlight on Best Practices in Competency Restoration, and a Grant Writing Workshop. Participants will receive tools to help navigate the complex mental health laws. Still undecided? [Hear](#) why some of our 2022 speakers love attending the Summit. [Registration](#) is FREE.

A limited number of scholarships to cover the costs of travel and lodging are available for Texas judges and attorneys in good standing. The scholarships are in the form of post-event reimbursement. The scholarship application is [here](#).