

Newton/Jasper Counties Adult Sexual Assault Response Team By-laws

ARTICLE I. NAME AND MISSION

Section 1. Name

Newton/Jasper Counties Adult Sexual Assault Response Team.

Section 2. Mission & Values

The purpose of the Newton/Jasper Counties Adult Sexual Assault Response Team, responding as the adult Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) as directed by Senate Bill 476 of the 87th Texas Regular Legislative Session for Newton/Jasper Counties, is to improve collaboration among all agencies working with adult survivors of sexual assault and coordinate efforts to fulfill the obligations of SB 476.

Newton/Jasper Counties SART will adopt the values of respect, honesty, victim-centered decision making, and collaboration to accomplish the SART's purpose.

The Newton/Jasper Counties SART's purpose is to enhance services to victims and increase offender accountability.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Members & Counties

As appointed by Newton/Jasper Counties Commissioner's Court, the regular members of the SART shall be composed of; (or their designee)

- (1) the chief administrator, of a sexual assault program that provides services for the county;
- (2) a prosecutor with jurisdiction in the county over cases involving sexual assault committed against adults;
- (3) the chief, or the chief's designee, of the municipal police department with the largest population in the county, provided a municipality in the county has a municipal police department;
- (4) the sheriff or the sheriffs designee;
- (5) either:
 - (A) a sexual assault nurse examiner or forensic examiner from a facility that conducts sexual assault forensic exams for the county; or
 - (B) a representative from the largest health care provider operating in the county if the county does not have a professional described by Paragraph (A); a behavioral health services provider operating in the county or, if the county does not have a behavioral health services provider, a representative from the county health department; and
- (6) other persons the presiding officer of the response team considers necessary for the operation of the response team or as recommended by the response team.¹

Section 2. Resignations, Termination and Absences

Resignation from the SART by an individual shall be in writing and received by the Presiding Officer.

SART members are required to attend meetings but may be excused from attendance upon notification to the Presiding Officer prior to the scheduled meeting and by sending a designee to attend on their behalf.²

SART members may be removed from the team following more than 3 unexcused absences.

Section 3. Vacancies

Vacancies occurring within the team's required members shall be communicated by the Presiding Officer to the County Commissioner's Court within 30 days of receiving notice.

¹ Texas Local Government Code 351252

² Texas Local Government Code 351.254 (b)(c)

Section 4. Attendance by Non-members

Additional individuals or agencies who are not regular members may be permitted to attend any open SART meetings-3

Section 5. Survivor Engagement

Newton/Jasper Counties SART will endeavor to include survivors in the work of the SART.

ARTICLE III. ELECTED OFFICERS

Section 1. Duties of Officers

The duties of the Presiding Officer include scheduling meetings, setting agendas and facilitating meetings.

The duties of the Vice President will be to preside in the absence of the Presiding Officer.

The duties of the Secretary will be to maintain all records required by law and at the direction of the SART.

Section 2. Terms

All Officers shall be elected to a two-year term.

Section 3. Elections

The elections shall be held every two years and determined by a majority vote of members present, so long as there is a quorum. Any member may nominate or be nominated to be an Officer.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS

Section 1. Quorum

A quorum will consist of at least four members of the SART. A quorum of members of the SART must be present or have sent a designee in order to conduct any business that requires a vote of the SART.

Section 2. Meetings

Regular meetings of the SART shall be held quarterly and at the call of the Presiding Officer.⁴ Special meetings of the SART may be held at any time upon 72 hours' written notice to the team.

Section 3. Notice of Meetings

Written notice stating the place, date, and hour of any regular meeting of the SART shall be sent out electronically with a minimum notice of three days. Agendas shall be sent out electronically in advance at least three days ahead of time by the Presiding Officer.

Section 4. Virtual Meetings

Members of the SART or any committee developed by the SART may participate in a meeting by means of conference telephone, virtual platform, or similar communications equipment by which all persons participating in the meeting can communicate with each other. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this section shall constitute presence at such meetings.

ARTICLE V. SART PROTOCOL

Section 1. Protocol Development

Per Section 351.256 Texas Local Government Code, the team shall work together to develop an inaugural SART protocol no later than December 1, 2023. Team members shall contribute to protocol development as a requisite of their membership. The protocol shall be reviewed no later than 90 days after each regular legislative session and included in the biennial report.

³ Texas Local Government Code 351.258(b)

⁴ Texas Local Government Code 351.254(a)

ARTICLE VI. BIENNIAL REPORT

Section 1, Data Sharing

SART members in law enforcement and/or prosecution responsible for the data described by Local Government Code 351.257(3)(A) shall collect, maintain and share this information for publication in the biennial report. Data shall be used to inform improvement of community response.

Section 2. Biennial Report

SART members are responsible for the biennial report due to the County Commissioners Court every odd numbered year. By accepting membership onto the team, members agree to contribute to the biennial report. This report shall run from September 1st of every odd numbered year through August 31st of every odd numbered year. (ex: September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2023; September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2025; etc.)

ARTICLE Vile CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Section 1. Process

Members of the SART shall approve and adopt an inaugural framework for a conflict resolution process no later than November 8, 2023. Following the initial adoption, a framework for this process shall be reviewed and updated as necessary in conjunction with the SART Protocol.³

Section 2. Commitment

Agreement to actively engage in resolving conflict using the team's established process is an expectation of each team member. Effective conflict resolution practices contribute to a higher level of team functioning and success. SART members shall look to their stated mission, values and statutory mandates to prioritize survivor safety and wellbeing in order to address conflicts.

ARTICLE Villa COMMUNICATION

Section 1. Privacy, Confidentiality & Privilege

As required by SB476, the team shall develop communication processes in order to facilitate the timely exchange of relevant information. In any scenario involving protected victim information, the SART will honor all member and team privacy obligations under Texas law, HIPAA, 42CFR and other state and federal regulations.

ARTICLE IX- AMENDMENTS

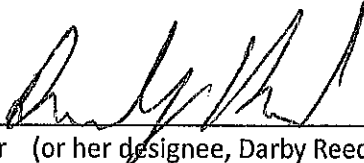
Section 1. Amendments

The team shall review the Bylaws every two years. In order to amend the Bylaws, notice of the proposed amendment shall be delivered personally, electronically or by mail to each member of the SART at least two weeks prior to the time of the vote on the proposed amendment. The Bylaws shall be amended only by a majority vote of the Team.

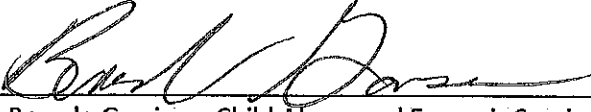
Dated: NOVEMBER 15, 2023

³ Texas Local Government Code 351256 (a)(11)

Signed by all members:



Holly Borel, Spindletop Center (or her designee, Darby Reed)

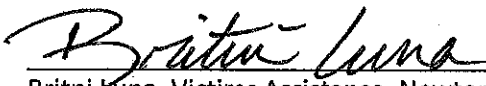


Brenda Garrison, Child Abuse and Forensic Services, Inc

Newton County:



Courtney Ponthier, District Attorney, Newton County District Attorney's Office



Britoi Luna, Victims Assistance, Newton County District Attorney's Office

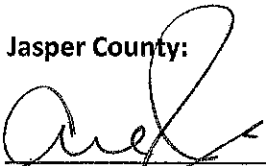


Robert Burby, Sheriff, Newton County Sheriff's Office

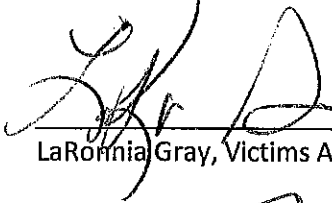


William Jackson, Chief, Newton Police Department

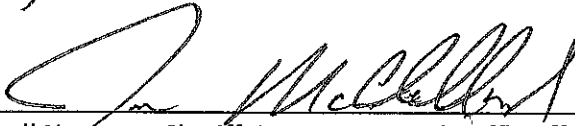
Jasper County:




Anne Pickle, District Attorney, Jasper County District Attorney's Office



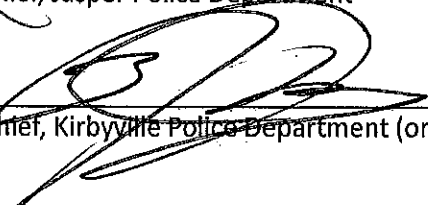
LaRonnia Gray, Victims Assistance, Jasper County District Attorney's Office



Mitchell Newman, Sheriff, Jasper County Sheriff's Office



Gerald Hall, Chief, Jasper Police Department



Paul Brister, Chief, Kirbyville Police Department (or his designee, Josh Hancock)