



## **TCSO 2023 PREA Annual Report**

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### **Background**

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed by Congress and signed into federal law by President George W. Bush in 2003 to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment occurring in confinement settings.

The Travis County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) has ZERO TOLERANCE for all forms of sexual abuse and sexual harassment within its jail facilities. Procedures are in place to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual misconduct in accordance with federal PREA standards. The Sheriff's Office administratively and/or criminally investigates all alleged incidents of a sexual nature.

### **Continued Compliance**

TCSO's two correctional facilities have maintained PREA compliance through three audit cycles (2016, 2020, and 2023). TCSO's PREA program ensures we provide staff training, inmate education, and screening for risk of victimization and/or abusiveness. We conduct investigations of every allegation of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, and we continuously monitor the facilities and population. From our most vulnerable inmates to individuals with the highest potential to become abusers. The PREA team provides input in many areas of agency work, including housing determinations, video monitoring system deployment, hiring, and promotion standards.

### **2023 Survey of Sexual Violence**

Each year, TCSO collects PREA data in accordance with PREA standard 115.87 in order to assess and improve the effectiveness of sexual abuse prevention, detection, response policies, practices and training. We compare this data to data from prior years and take information from the year's cases and events to identify strengths and problem areas. This allows us to make any necessary corrections or adjustments to our practices. This data must also be reported to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, when requested.

§115.5 General definitions related to outcomes of investigations:

**Substantiated**— an allegation that was investigated and determined to have occurred.

**Unsubstantiated**—an allegation that was investigated and the investigation produced insufficient evidence to make a final determination as to whether or not the event occurred.

**Unfounded**—an allegation that was investigated and determined not to have occurred.

§115.6 Definitions related to sexual abuse (see full definitions [here](#)):

**Inmate on Inmate Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by another inmate, detainee, or resident.

**Inmate on Inmate Sexual Harassment** – repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one inmate directed toward another:

**Staff Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, to include contact, voyeurism, exposure, threat of sexual abuse

**Staff Sexual Harassment** – Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations Outcome January 2023 – December 2023				
	Findings	Sexual Abuse	Sexual Harassment	Total
Staff on Inmate	Substantiated	0	0	0
	Unsubstantiated	0	0	0
	Unfounded	4	6	10
Subtotal		4	6	11
Inmate on Inmate	Substantiated	2	7	9
	Unsubstantiated	12	14	27
	Unfounded	4	6	8
Subtotal		18	27	44
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>55</b>

### **2023 Reports in Review**

PREA documented 55 allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, with two inmate-on-inmate sexual abuse and seven inmate-on-inmate sexual harassment allegations substantiated. This was closely examined by PREA and command staff to ensure we continue to provide meaningful reporting mechanisms and that we recognize abuse and harassment outcries correctly under the PREA definitions.

Calendar Year (CY)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population	2,376	2,170	1,893	1,629	2,148	2242
Total Intakes	41,791	37,302	23,742	23,145	25,951	30,087

Reporting methods grew during this time with the introduction of the electronic request form. This method of reporting is available to the inmate population through the tablet system. The inmate population still has access to paper grievances; however, the electronic version allows for additional privacy for the user. Our other reporting methods did not change and remained in full effect. Both SAFE alliance and the PREA Hotline remained available and free for inmates. SAFE alliance continues to forward reported incidents while providing counseling support for inmates who have been victims of sexual violence. Reports are also taken in from inmates directly to staff, through visitation (whether in person or on the website) and by staff themselves who find instances of sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment. This all reinforces a culture of reporting that is crucial for the safety and security of the inmate population.

The incarcerated population increased from an average of 2,148 in CY 2022 to 2,242 in CY 2023. Changes in some buildings, such as going from direct to indirect, kept things manageable for staff.

Staff training continued to be a top priority for PREA through the Bi-annual PREA training where all staff complete a PREA education course in order to keep them trained and up to date. This was separate from our C.O.B.R.A. PREA classes, our standalone courses, our supervisor training courses, and our optional online SCOOP series. This is all done to make sure every staff member knows PREA policy and procedures. Ensuring every scenario involving sexual abuse or sexual harassment is handled within policy.

#### **Additional Areas of Focus**

The PREA Team continued to work cooperatively with community partners, including SAFE Alliance and BRAVE Alliance. PREA staff and supervisory staff worked closely with sex crimes detectives in the Law Enforcement Division. The PREA Team worked with our agency's victims' services staff, who respond to allegations in our facility and provide support and information to inmate victims. Our staff in medical and behavioral health services are invaluable partners in both detecting and responding to sexual victimization.

A mock audit was conducted in the Fall of 2022 to prepare staff for the upcoming audit in 2023. This found a number of areas that could improve PREA related operations such as the screening process and youthful inmates. The screening process was reworked with PREA conducting screenings with the PREA TCJ Compliance Officer and PREA TCCC Compliance Officer within 72 hours of an inmate being brought into either facility. Youthful inmates were moved to a unit that had additional measures to protect this population from the adult population. PREA SOP was reviewed and updated. Overall, the mock audit was a success in finding weaknesses within

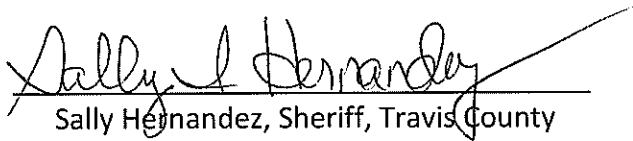
our implementation of the PREA standards and strengthening them before our official audit the following year.

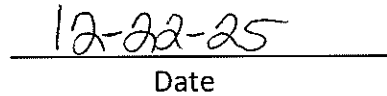
**PREA Personnel Changes**

It should also be noted that the PREA Coordinator position was filled at the beginning of the year, as well as two new PREA Admin Compliance Officer positions (one was to replace the officer promoted to the PREA Coordinator position) to assist the current PREA Admin Compliance Officer and the PREA Screening Officer.

**Conclusion**

As another year comes to an end, we continue to ensure that TCSO takes the best course of action for the prevention of sexual victimization and the elimination of sexual abuse for the incarcerated population within our facilities.

  
Sally Hernandez, Sheriff, Travis County

  
Date