



TCSO 2024 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. Policies and procedures are in place to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in accordance with federal PREA standards. The Sheriff's Office administratively and/or criminally investigates all alleged incidents of a sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

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 screening, re-screening, housing determinations, sexual abuse and sexual harassment investigations, video monitoring system deployment, hiring, training, promotion and data collection standards.

2024 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.

Reports in Review

TCSO documented 108 allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, with six inmate-on-inmate sexual abuse and three inmate-on-inmate sexual harassment allegations substantiated. These were closely examined by PREA staff and command staff to ensure we continue to provide meaningful reporting mechanisms and that we recognize sexual abuse and sexual harassment outcries correctly under the PREA definitions.

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations Outcome							
		2023			2024		
	Findings	Sexual Abuse	Sexual Harassment	Total	Sexual Abuse	Sexual Harassment	Total
Staff on Inmate	Substantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Unsubstantiated	0	0	0	9	3	12
	Unfounded	4	6	10	22	5	27
Subtotal		4	6	11	31	8	39
Inmate on Inmate	Substantiated	2	7	9	6	3	9
	Unsubstantiated	12	14	27	19	16	35
	Unfounded	4	6	8	18	7	25
Subtotal		18	27	44	43	26	69
TOTAL		22	33	55	74	34	108

There are multiple reporting methods available to the inmate population, including methods to make reports privately. The inmate population has access to paper grievances and an electronic version which allows for additional privacy for the user. Our other reporting methods did not

change and remained in full effect: third-party reporting, reporting to staff, contractors and volunteers. 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 suspect sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment. These reporting options reinforce a culture of reporting that is crucial for the safety and security of the inmate population as well as staff.

The incarcerated population increased from an average of 2,242 in CY 2023 to 2,316 in CY 2024. Changes in some buildings, such as going from direct to indirect, kept things manageable for staff.

Calendar Year (CY)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average Daily Population	2,376	2,170	1,893	1,629	2,148	2242	2316
Total Intakes	41,791	37,302	23,742	23,145	25,951	30,087	30760

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 staff trained and up to date. This is separate from the 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 the agency's PREA policy and procedures. Ensuring every scenario involving sexual abuse or sexual harassment is handled within policy and procedures. Certain staff, contractor and volunteer positions require additional and specialized training: investigators, medical and mental health care. New training was developed and implemented for newly promoted sergeants responsible for conducting sexual abuse and sexual harassment investigations. A team of mental health practitioners had an opportunity to participate in Trauma Informed training. The PREA Coordinator participated in the 6th Annual PREA Coordinator's Conference.

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.

The PREA Team was responsible for conducting individual inmate PREA Screenings, within 72 hours of arrival at each facility – TCJ and TCCC, and Re-screenings, not to exceed 30 days from the inmate's arrival at each facility (TCJ and TCCC) if the inmate was still in custody. This required the team to screen an inmate upon arrival at TCJ and again upon transfer to TCCC. This practice was implemented due to prior findings that TCJ and the DV facilities were considered two separate facilities for audit purposes based on the 2017 and 2020 audits resulting in two

separate facility audit reports; whereas the 2023 audit resulted in one audit report that combined both facilities. To seek clarification, the TCSO presented supporting documentation and requested consideration from the PREA Management Office (PMO) make a determination that TCJ and TCCC count as one facility. The request that TCJ and TCCC be considered as one facility for PREA auditing purposes was granted in November 2024 at which time, the PREA team transitioned to conducting the screenings at TCJ and re-screenings at TCCC.

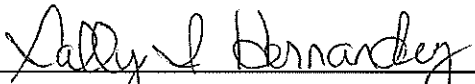
Youthful inmates continue to be housed separately from adult inmates and additional measures are implemented to ensure these inmates are sight and sound separated from the adult population.

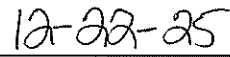
PREA Personnel Changes

The PREA coordinator position was filled in April due to prior coordinator transferring to a new position. One new PREA compliance manager position was filled (due to staff retirement) to assist the current PREA compliance manager 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 and sexual harassment for the incarcerated population within our facility.


Sally Hernandez, Sheriff, Travis County


Date