

Rains County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)

To: Rains County Commissioners Court

From: Jeremy Flowers, Director of Coordinated Community Response, East Texas Crisis Center

Date: 11/13/2025

Subject: Executive Summary – Rains County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) 2025 Activity Report

Executive Summary

The Rains County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) convened quarterly during 2025, with meetings held in January, June, and September. The team will conclude its annual cycle with a final meeting in December. These meetings reflect a continued commitment to strengthening collaboration among system partners and improving the community's coordinated response to sexual assault.

During this reporting period, there were no cases reviewed by the SART due to the absence of reported sexual assault incidents within the county. While this may initially appear positive, it presents an ongoing challenge to the efficacy of the team's intended function. The lack of case reviews underscores the broader issue of underreporting and the persistent barriers that may prevent survivors from coming forward to seek help or engage the justice system.

Recognizing this challenge, the Rains County SART has identified community awareness and outreach as a primary focus for the coming year. The team's goal is to increase public awareness of available resources and to foster a safe and supportive environment in which survivors feel empowered to disclose to at least one of the partner agencies. This will allow for an immediate, trauma-informed response and ensure that survivors have access to advocacy, medical care, and legal support.

Member agencies have committed to continued collaboration, refinement of interagency protocols, and participation in ongoing training to enhance their trauma-informed response. These efforts will ensure that when survivors do come forward, Rains County is prepared to respond with professionalism, coordination, and compassion, fulfilling the intent of the SART mandate and strengthening the county's overall response to sexual assault.

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GUIDELINES FOR THE RAINS COUNTY ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

SUBCHAPTER J, COUTNY ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAMS (§535 11.251 — 351.258)

Sec. 351.251. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

- (1) "Adult" means an individual who is not a child as defined by Section 101.003, Family Code.
- (2) "Response Team" means a multidisciplinary team established under this subchapter to strengthen the collaborative response and enhance health and judicial outcome for sexual assault survivors who are adults.
- (3) "Sexual Assault Program" means a program that:
 - (A) Operates independently from a law enforcement agency or prosecutor's office;
 - (B) Is operated by a local public or private nonprofit corporation either independently or as part of a municipal, county, or state agency; and
 - (C) Provides the minimum services, as defined by Section 420.003, Government Code, to adult survivors of stranger and non-stranger sexual assault.
- (4) "Survivor" means an individual who is a victim of sexual assault or the other sex offense, regardless of whether the police report is filed for the incident.

Added by Acts 2021, 87" Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. I, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.252. ESTABLISHMENT. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the commissioners court of each county shall establish an adult sexual assault response team that includes the following members appointed by the commissioner's court:

- (1) The chief administrator, or the chief administrator's designee, 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 of the sheriff's 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);

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(6) 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

(7) 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.

(C) Two or more counties, each with a population of 250,000 or less, within a contiguous area may partner to form a multicounty response team.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.253. PRESIDING OFFICER. The response team shall elect a presiding officer from among its members.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.254. MEETINGS. (a) A response team shall meet:

(1) At least quarterly at a time determined by the presiding officer;

(2) Not later than the 90th day after the last day of a regular legislative session to review and amend as necessary any protocols, forms, or guidelines developed under this subchapter; and

(3) At any other time at the call of the presiding officer.

(B) If a response team member is unable to Participate in a response team meeting, the member or entity the member is representing may designate another individual to represent the member or entity at the meeting. Each member or a designee of that member must participate in all response team meetings.

(C) A response team member must attend the quarterly meetings held as required under Subsection (a)(I) to participate in response team functions.

(D) A response team shall meet independently of a children's advocacy center multidisciplinary team described by Section 264.406, Family Code.

Added by Acts 2021, 87" Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.255. VACANCIES. The commissioner's court of a county shall fill a vacancy for a response team member not later than the 30th day after the date the vacancy occurs and in the same manner as the original appointment.

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Rains County Adult Sexual Assault Response Protocol

Added by Acts 2021, 87" Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.256. ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE PROTOCOL. (a) A response team shall develop written protocol addressing the coordinated response for adult survivors in the county that includes:

- (1) The procedures to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from a report of sexual assault;
- (2) Interagency information sharing, in accordance with the state and federal law, to ensure the timely exchange of relevant information and enhance the response to survivors;
- (3) The location and accessibility of sexual assault forensic examinations;
- (4) Information on the availability of and access to the medical care when the care is clinically indicated;
- (5) A requirement to ensure survivors are offered access to sexual assault program

advocates, as defined by Section 420.003, Government Code;

(6) Information on the availability of and access to mental and behavioral health services;

(7) A requirement to ensure that relevant law enforcement agencies notify survivors in a timely manner regarding the status of any criminal case and court proceeding;

(8) An assessment of relevant community trends, including drug-facilitated sexual assault, the incidence of predatory date rape, and sex trafficking;

(9) A biennial evaluation through sexual assault case reviews the effectiveness of individual agency and interagency protocols and systems;

(10) At least four hours of annual cross-agency training on the dynamics of sexual assault for response team members Participating in the quarterly meetings as required by Section 351.254(c); and

(11) Procedures for addressing conflicts within the response team and for maintaining the confidentiality of information shared among response team members as required by law.

(B) In developing a protocol under this section, the response team:

(1) Shall consider Chapter 56A, Code of Criminal Procedure;

(2) May provide different procedures for use within particular municipality or area of the county served by the response team; and

(3) Shall prioritize the health and safety of survivors.

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(C) The purpose of the protocol developed under this section is to ensure coordination between all agencies involved in sexual assault cases to increase the efficacy of response and to minimize survivor traumatization. The response team shall provide the Protocol to each agency in the county that responds to disclosures of sexual assault.

(D) Failure to follow a protocol developed under this section does not:

(1) Constitute the basis for a claim or defense to a civil or criminal action; or

(2) Preclude the admissibility of evidence.

Added by Acts 2021, 87° Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.257. REPORT. Not later than December 1 of each odd numbered year, a response team shall provide to the commissioners court of each county the response team serves a report that includes:

(I) A list of response team members able to Participate in the quarterly meetings required by Section 351.254(c);

Q) A Copy of the written protocol developed under Section 351.256; and

(3) Either:

(4) A biennial summary detailing:

(i) The number of sexual assault reports received by local law enforcement agencies;

(ii) The number of investigations conducted as a result of those reports;

(iii) The number of indictments presented in connection with a report and the disposition of those cases; and

(iv) The number of reports of sexual assault for which no indictment was Presented; or

(B) An explanation of the reason the response team failed to provide the information described by Paragraph (A).

Added by Acts 2021, 87* Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. I, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 351.258. MEETINGS AND RECORDS; CONFIDENTIALITY. (A) A response team meeting is not subject to Chapter 551, Government Code.

(B) This section does not prohibit a response team from requesting or allowing the attendance of a person who is not a response team member at a response team meeting.

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(C) Information and records acquired by a response team in the exercise of its purpose and duties under this subchapter are confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may only be disclosed as necessary to implement the response team's purpose and duties.

(D) A report or a statistical compilation of data reports created by the response team is public information subject to Chapter 552, Government Code, provided the report or compilation does not contain any personally identifiable information.

(E) Information, documents, and records of the response team that are confidential under this section are not subject to subpoena or discovery and may not be introduced into evidence in any civil, criminal, or administrative proceeding, except that information, documents, and records otherwise available from other sources are not immune from subpoena, discovery, or introduction into evidence solely because that information or those documents or records were presented during a response team meeting or maintained by the response team.

(F) A response team may only review a sexual assault case of an adult survivor with the signed, written consent of the survivor. The consent must specify:

- (1) The information or records covered by the release;
- (2) The reason or purpose for the release; and
- (3) The person or agency to which the information is to be released.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (S.B. 476), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

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PROTOCOLS

I. SART Mission Statement

Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) works to ensure proper handling and reviewing of cases involving adult victims of Sexual Assault in Rains County.

II. Goals and Objective

To provide a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) of professionals to work together to facilitate the prevention; detection; investigation, and treatment to ensure that the best interest of the victim(s) are being served. To coordinate SART meetings regularly to discuss cases. The team of professionals work together to ensure that the best interest of the victim is being served.

III. Specific Criteria for cases to be referred to SART Team

The SART is committed to providing multi-disciplinary services to victims of sexual abuse as described in the Texas Family Code and the Penal Code. The SART will also: provide services for victim(s) of sexual assault,

A. SART Participating Agencies

1. Law Enforcement
2. Prosecution
3. SANE
4. Mental Health Coordinator

5. Victim Support Advocacy

B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Law Enforcement (LE) Agencies — LE agencies are responsible for conducting criminal investigations of sexual abuse cases in which a crime may have occurred as defined by the Texas Family Code and the Texas Penal Code.

a. LE will interview victims and witnesses in sexual abuse cases, collect and process evidence and coordinate their investigation with other agencies necessary for the investigation.

b. LE will participate in the quarterly SART team meetings, when their cases are scheduled for review or assign a representative to share case updates.

c. LE will strive to conduct joint investigations when possible

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2. Prosecution — The District Attorney will prosecute all criminal cases of sexual abuse whether the defendant is either juvenile or adult.

a. The District Attorney's Office will provide the SART Team dispositions of the cases which are prosecuted or presented before the grand jury.

b. The District Attorney will participate in the quarterly SART team meetings, when their cases are scheduled to review or assign a representative to share case updates.

c. The District Attorney will communicate to investigating agencies what information is needed to ready a case for prosecution.

3. Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) — Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners will perform a forensic sexual assault examination of cases that have been referred by Law Enforcement (Please refer to Medical Section)

a. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner will participate in the quarterly SART team meetings, when their cases are scheduled for review, or assign a representative or be available by phone to share case updates.

b. Sexual Assault exam information is given to requesting agency as soon as available.

c. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner will maintain requirements to be certified as Adult/Adolescent and Pediatric SANE through the Texas Office of the Attorney General (Monitored by SANE Coordinator).

4. Mental Health Counselors — Mental Health Counselors will provide individual, family or group counseling services.

a. The Mental Health Counselor will attend the quarterly SART team meetings or send a monthly summary to be shared by the appropriate designee for the Team.

5. Victim Support and Advocacy — A Family Advocate role is to provide support and services to all victims and their families.

a. Services include crisis intervention, Crime Victim's Compensation, Victim's Rights, counseling referrals, needs assessment and education on trauma and abuse.

b. Serve as liaison between the families and our SART team by attending Case Review Staffing's.

C. Conflict Resolution Policy

1. If a SART member has conflict with another SART member, it is best if Possible that the two meet to discuss and resolve the issue.

2. If that is not possible, it is recommended that the immediate supervisor be informed of the conflict and work to resolve the issue.

3. If that measure is unsuccessful, then the supervisor's immediate authority should be consulted for the resolution of the issue.

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4, Documentation should be written according to the policy of each agency represented.

D. Confidentiality — All the undersigned involved, volunteers, SART members and ad-hoc SART members, within the bounds allowed by law agree to;

1. Maintain confidentiality of all records and information gathered all child sexual and severe physical abuse cases as outlined in the Texas Family Penal

Code, 264.408 and 264.406(e)

2. Maintain confidentiality throughout the duration of a case, the beginning of the investigation, during service provision and the completion of prosecution.

3. Understand that information discussed by the SART will not be divulged outside the SART meeting or to any unauthorized person.

IV. Victim Support and Advocacy

A. Victim support and advocacy is provided by the East Texas Crisis Center and the Rains County Crimes Victim's Coordinator throughout the interview process and beyond.

B. Advocates, and support staff, work in conjunction with, Law Enforcement and Victims Assistance Coordinators through the DA's office to provide support and follow-up care for victim(s) through:

1. Ensuring that each victim received victim-centered services
2. Connecting the victim with additional resources within their community as necessary to meet their needs.
3. Assisting with Applications for Assistance and/or Crime Victims Compensation when deemed necessary.
4. Referrals for Counseling.

Accompaniment to court when necessary

Regular follow-up calls for victim to offer support, further education, and encourage them to call and advocate for assistance when needed.

C. At some point during the investigative Process, an Advocate or trained staff/volunteer will meet with the victim to:

1. Offer written and/or verbal information on the Rights of a Victim of a crime, and Victims Information and Notification.
2. Explain the Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) process and offers assistance in completing the application.
3. Offers referrals for other community organizations that may be of assistance to them.

D. Family Advocates and Counselors work together to help victims understand the dynamics of abuse and serve to education and support the rest of the SART team.

E. Advocates encourages victims to contact

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Law Enforcement and prosecutors (District or County Attorney) for case follow-up, information and assistance regarding criminal or civil Proceedings to keep current with the investigation.

F, The District Attorney handles court education at their respective office.

G. The Advocate and/or Counselor may be subpoenaed to testify for the Prosecution or defense in the case.

H. When in need of a protective order or other assistance in connection to the

Prosecution of their case they are referred to their local District Attorney's

Victim Assistance Coordinators (VAC) when available.

Medical Evaluation

Medical/Forensic exams are provided to the client without cost, therefore, the ability to pay is not a factor in determining the need for an exam. The Hospital and/or SANE Nurse will bill the OAG directly for reimbursement.

The investigating law enforcement agency must authorize a sexual assault forensic medical exam using a form created by the OAG. The process requires the investigator to indicate whether the exam is authorized in writing or declined (using the form). This form is to remain in the investigators case file.

Routine head to toe assessments for physical injuries are also part of the SANE exam for sexual assault victims.

All acute assaults (those occurring within 120 hours of the report are Presenting with trauma) presenting initially to law enforcement will refer the patient to the Emergency Room for immediate assessment and treatment by ER personnel. When necessary, Law Enforcement will

transfer patient to hospital for treatment.

ER personnel should notify Law Enforcement as required by law if abuse is suspected for cases presenting initially to hospital emergency room. ER personnel should attempt to contact SANE on staff and, if available, request their participation in the examination.

A. Standard emergency room assessment and treatment procedures should be enacted by hospital personnel to treat immediate needs of patient while preserving integrity of criminal investigation. ER personnel are encouraged to limit questioning of the patient in regard to details of the assault and focus on

Adequate assessment of the degree and immediacy of injuries
Determine and administer appropriate course of treatment and

A. Ascertain agency jurisdiction and reporting obligations.

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B. Law enforcement/prosecution personnel will not be present during actual examination of patient unless specifically requested by attending physician and/or SANE.

Medical personnel will notify Law Enforcement as required by law if abuse is suspected on cases presenting initially to physician office.

9. Coordination of services utilizing these three presentation protocols are intended to prevent multiple exams of a victim and avoid duplication of history taking or interviews.

10. Victim(s) that are first treated by a medical provider who does not specialize in SANE exams and who does not meet the training standards such as a paramedic, or emergency room physician, will be reviewed by the SANE to assess the need for additional evaluation and/or follow-up care.

11. Medical Reports/Test Results/Assessments

A. Upon Receipt of an authorization for release of Medical Records, hospital or physician's office will provide

12. Law Enforcement/Prosecution

a. Copies of all requested documentation pertaining to examination

and treatment of patient: Further sharing of medical reports, etc will be conducted as outlined in standard SART protocol and procedures in order to coordinate the MDT and prevent duplicate interviews or history taking.

b. It is the responsibility of Law Enforcement receiving the collected laboratory specimens (i.e. smears, swabs, blood, hair, etc.) to have specimens processed and reported to them. To report; any positive test which is required to be reported to the State Health Department.

J. Authority

1. The SANE exam will only be performed on the authority of Law Enforcement as a result of Law Enforcement need or the request of the SART to Law Enforcement.

K. Exam Protocols

1. SANE interviews and exam procedures take between 2-6 hours to complete

2. The examiner will interview the victim to obtain any in depth history required that is not available from investigating officer.

3: A head-to-toe assessments performed, Medical intervention in cases of suspected physical abuse and maltreatment are assessed. The victim may have a supportive person (staff member, volunteer or relative) in the room during the exam

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4. The responsible agency, Law Enforcement, will be present to accept (or mailed via USPS) the exam report, including any other evidence collected during the exam in order to provide chain-of-custody.

5. A discussion, summary, and opportunity for questions take place with the victim.

6. A Referral to a family physician or medical provider will be coordinated for any injuries

or abnormalities found during the exam.

7. Plans for follow-up blood work (AIDS, syphilis, pregnancy) are also discussed and a referral to the victim's physician or health department is made.

8. The victim is encouraged to contact the SANE if any further questions or concerns arise.

9. The victim is informed that a follow-up call will be made to ensure any questions that arise can be answered.

L. Sexual Assault Examination Procedure

1. The SANE Nurse prepares the form(s) or authorization and has the Victim sign for authorization.

2. Law Enforcement, if involved, will receive original of the medical report.

3. Copies of SANE records are the property of the SANE and are to be designated as "copy".

4. SANE records MAY NOT BE FAXED!!! They are to be picked up or sent by mail to the investigative agency requesting the records. Records may not be transmitted by email unless the email is encrypted.

5. Lawyers must send a subpoena in order to release records, of which the SANE is the custodian of records.

M. Appointment Types

1. Initial Assessment (IA) includes social history, behavior indicators, abuse history, and medical exam if done at hospital or physician's office.

2. To determine immediate needs of the victim.

3. The team will inform the victim of the medical procedure so that they know what to expect.

4. If the victim needs an appointment for a SANE exam, an appointment will be set up with the examiner.

N. Mental Health

1. Advocates involved in the case will discuss the need for counseling and other resources with the victim, as part of the post-interview process.

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2. The victim will be screened during and after the SANE to determine need for mental health services.

a. The victim will be eligible for mental health services, provided through the crisis center.

b. Compensation for counseling services, provided by therapists, will be provided by victim's private insurance, Medicaid, CHIPS, or Crime Victim's Compensation (CVC).

3. Counseling referrals will be made by an Advocate or Therapist.

4. Advocates will assist victims in filing Crime Victims Compensation, if needed, to aid in lifelong counseling benefits.

5. Victim support and advocacy is available throughout the investigation and prosecution, when needed.

6. Information and records pertaining to a client's mental health treatment is considered protected health information (PHI) and must be kept confidential in accordance with HIPPA and Chapter 181 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

a. Clients and/or guardians must consent and sign a release of confidential Mental Health information in order to release PHI to other providers or partners.

b. Exceptions to confidentiality include suspected abuse or neglect, risk of harm to self or others and court orders. In these instances, a signed release is not required.

7. Mental Health records must be kept secure, either in a locked filing cabinet or under password protection software. Records should not be left unattended where anyone else could have access to them.

8. Mental Health Providers will participate in Case Review Staffing, either by sending monthly updates to Staff Therapist or by attending and providing case-specific information.

9. The forensic process of gathering evidentiary information and determining what the victim may have experienced is separate from mental health treatment processes. Mental health treatment is a clinical process designed to assess and mitigate the long-term adverse impacts of trauma or other diagnosable mental health conditions.

10. Therapists' participation with SART is to ensure that the victim(s) treatment needs and mental health can be monitored, assessed, and taken into account as the SART makes case decisions.

O. Case Review

1. SART meetings will be held on a quarterly basis for each partner agency/organization.

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2. LE, DA, SANE, Counselors, Advocates and other agency/organization's will be invited and expected to attend as needed for case coordination and collaboration.

3. Are held in a private area for discussion in the appropriate county jurisdiction (if private area is not available, meetings may be held at the DA's office)

4. Are conducted by an elected member of the SART team.

5. Team members may request an additional staffing on a specific case, or an Emergency Staffing:

- a. Due to homicide
- b. Multiple non-related victims in an institutional setting.
- c. The alleged perpetrator is an employee of a partner agency or State, Federal or Local Government.
- d. Any need requiring specialized assistance.

6. Staffing dates will be sent out in January for the year in advance

7. Quarterly notices sent for review of the previous six months' cases for each county

- a. Cases in which team members wanted to continue to confer and coordinate case information and intervention.

8. Once a year, all pending cases lacking dispositions by LE or the DA will be reviewed by the SART Team. Prior to this quarterly staffing, notification and case lists are sent via email by designated SART member.

9. During quarterly case reviews, the designated SART member will take notes.

10. Case Staffing is held for the purpose of:

a. To ensure each case will be worked from the outset through a cooperative, collaborative and effective effort by the partner agencies.

b. To allow professionals to share information assisting in the formation of knowledgeable decisions regarding cases being reviewed

c. To allow team members to share facts and observations
To assist with the investigation process and monitor cases

e. To bring knowledge, experience and expertise of each partner agencies representatives

f. To maximize everyone's effectiveness in fulfilling their respective roles by collaboration of the agencies involved in the intervention system.

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11. Because SART promotes a learning environment, the Case Review Staffing's/meetings assist in cross training education for members of the various disciplines.

P. Case Tracking

1. Will be determined by participating agencies/organization.

V. Review, Revisions and Re-Execution of Working Protocols

A. This agreement can be terminated by any party without cause by giving written notice to the other parties.

B. The working protocols must be reviewed, revised as needed-and re-executed at a minimum of every three years, upon significant changes to current practice, or upon an authorized partner agency signatures.

I have read and fully understand the SART Team Working Protocols. My signature below indicates that I hereby agree to support the concept and philosophy of the SART Team in my community and that representatives of my agency will abide by and follow the approved SART Working Protocols.

I further understand that the SART Working Protocols must be reviewed, revised as needed, and re-executed, at a minimum, every three years, upon significant changes to the document, or upon a change of authorized partner agency signatories. All State and Federal confidentiality laws will be followed in connection with this agreement, and this agreement can be terminated by any party without cause by giving written notice to the other parties.

The SART Team Members are as follows:

Rains County Attorney's Office — Robert Vititow

Rains County Attorney's Office — Jenny Mansfield

Rains County Attorney's Office – Erin Hreha-Purdon

Rains County Sheriff's Office — Michael Hopkins

Rains County Sheriff's Office – Mark Inmon

Emory Police Department — Cameron Demps

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Andrews Center — Jennifer Brashear

SANE Nurse — Kim Basinger

East Texas Crisis Center – Jeremy Flowers
