



TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT

800.374.HOPE

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 9, 2020

TAP and TCSO are Asking for Handbag Donations for Texas Women in Crisis 13TH Annual Handbags for Hope Press Conference

**** Survivors whose lives were impacted by this program will be available for interview ****
Spanish speaker available for interview

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM
Location: CommUnityCare Health Center, 1210 W. Braker Lane Austin, TX 78758
Visuals: Handbags and Diaper Bags with Legal Toolkits for Survivors
Speakers: Texas Advocacy Project CEO Heather Bellino
Travis County Sheriff Sally Hernandez
Guests: Former clients/domestic violence survivors

AUSTIN, TX March 11, 2020 – A woman’s handbag represents something deeply private to its owner – a kind of survival kit for life in a modern world. For those experiencing power-based abuse, it may also serve as a life-saving utility.

Join Texas Advocacy Project – with support from Travis County Sheriff’s Office and CommUnityCare Health Centers – at the launch of its 2020 Handbags for Hope campaign that runs today through April 10th, providing solutions to lead those experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault to safety and free legal services.

More than 45,500 handbags have been distributed to women across Texas since the campaign launched 13 years ago. Each bag is fitted with the following:

- A discreet tag that lists TAP’s toll-free legal line 1-800-374-HOPE
- Safety planning information
- Allstate Foundation’s Financial Empowerment Planning Guide

As the agency sought new ways get Handbags to more women in crisis, in 2019 these bags were distributed to hospitals for the first time, making them available to survivors of rape. After a survivor goes through a rape exam they often have to leave behind clothing and belongings, an extremely dehumanizing experience. Leaving the hospital with your belongings in a handbag versus a plastic bag, not only gives some dignity back, it also gives hope through the agency’s free services.

2020 brings a new collaboration with CommUnityCare Health Centers to reach at-risk moms-to-be, as pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. Diaper bags containing the same legal toolkits will be distributed. The partnership incorporates a series of trainings provided by Texas Advocacy Project so providers will have the tools to effectively engage with pregnant women and new mothers around the topics of personal safety and health concerns presented by domestic violence.

According to CEO Heather Bellino, “When victims call our legal line it is often the first time they have ever spoken with an attorney to learn that they have rights and that they can get protection and safety. It is a life-altering moment. Handbags for Hope arms them with one of the strongest tools to break the cycle of violence – access to legal services.”

About Texas Advocacy Project

Last year TAP served 4,738 clients, impacting the lives of nearly 10,659 women and their children. Their mission is to prevent domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking throughout Texas through FREE legal services, access to the justice system, and education. Details at www.TexasAdvocacyProject.org. If you need help, call 1-800-374-HOPE.

Speakers and guests will be available for interview immediately following the press conference.

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