

1-1 By: Neave, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Huffman) H.B. No. 1706  
1-2 (In the Senate - Received from the House May 3, 2021;  
1-3 May 10, 2021, read first time and referred to Committee on  
1-4 Jurisprudence; May 21, 2021, reported favorably by the following  
1-5 vote: Yeas 5, Nays 0; May 21, 2021, sent to printer.)

1-6 COMMITTEE VOTE

|      | Yea | Nay | Absent | PNV |
|------|-----|-----|--------|-----|
| 1-7  |     |     |        |     |
| 1-8  | X   |     |        |     |
| 1-9  | X   |     |        |     |
| 1-10 | X   |     |        |     |
| 1-11 | X   |     |        |     |
| 1-12 | X   |     |        |     |

1-13 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
1-14 AN ACT

1-15 relating to a specialty court program to provide victim services in  
1-16 sexual assault cases.

1-17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-18 SECTION 1. Title 2, Government Code, is amended by adding  
1-19 Subtitle K-1 to read as follows:

1-20 SUBTITLE K-1. SPECIALTY COURTS FOR VICTIM SERVICES

1-21 CHAPTER 141. SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES COURT PROGRAM

1-22 Sec. 141.001. SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES COURT PROGRAM

1-23 DEFINED. In this chapter, "sexual assault victim services court  
1-24 program" means a program that has the following essential  
1-25 characteristics:

1-26 (1) the integration of services provided by public  
1-27 agencies and community organizations for victims in sexual assault  
1-28 cases who voluntarily agree to participate in the program;

1-29 (2) the use of prosecutors with experience in  
1-30 prosecuting sexual assault cases and judges with experience in  
1-31 hearing sexual assault cases;

1-32 (3) early identification and prompt assignment of  
1-33 eligible cases to the court designated under Section 141.002(b);

1-34 (4) access for victims participating in the program to  
1-35 counseling and other related services provided by public agencies  
1-36 and community organizations;

1-37 (5) development of partnerships with public agencies  
1-38 and community organizations;

1-39 (6) monitoring and evaluation of program goals and  
1-40 effectiveness;

1-41 (7) continuing interdisciplinary education to promote  
1-42 effective program planning, implementation, and operations;

1-43 (8) inclusion of a participant's family members who  
1-44 voluntarily agree to be involved in the services provided to the  
1-45 participant under the program;

1-46 (9) prosecution of sexual assault offenses;

1-47 (10) issuance of protective orders for victims on the  
1-48 victim's consent and as authorized by state law; and

1-49 (11) continued monitoring of sexual assault  
1-50 defendants through prosecution and adjudication and for the  
1-51 duration of convicted offenders' sentences.

1-52 Sec. 141.002. AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH PROGRAM; ELIGIBILITY.

1-53 (a) The commissioners court of a county may establish a sexual  
1-54 assault victim services court program for participants who:

1-55 (1) are victims of an alleged sexual assault in which a  
1-56 person is arrested for or charged with an offense under Chapter 21  
1-57 or 22, Penal Code, committed against the victim; and

1-58 (2) voluntarily agree to participate in the program.

1-59 (b) The local administrative district and statutory county  
1-60 court judges of the county may designate a court in the county for  
1-61 assignment of cases described by Subsection (a). The judge of the

2-1 designated court must have experience hearing sexual assault cases  
2-2 under Chapter 21 or 22, Penal Code. The prosecuting attorney for  
2-3 the court must have experience in prosecuting sexual assault  
2-4 offenses under Chapter 21 or 22, Penal Code.

2-5 Sec. 141.003. DUTIES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES  
2-6 COURT PROGRAM. (a) A sexual assault victim services court program  
2-7 established under this chapter must:

2-8 (1) ensure that a victim eligible for participation in  
2-9 the program voluntarily agrees to participate in the program; and

2-10 (2) allow a participant to withdraw from the program  
2-11 at any time.

2-12 (b) A sexual assault victim services court program  
2-13 established under this chapter shall make, establish, and publish  
2-14 local procedures to ensure maximum participation of eligible  
2-15 victims in the county.

2-16 Sec. 141.004. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. A county may  
2-17 accept a gift, grant, donation, or bequest of money, services,  
2-18 equipment, goods, or other tangible or intangible property from any  
2-19 source for the sexual assault victim services court program.

2-20 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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