

By: Neave

H.B. No. 1531

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of a specialty court for sexual assault victim services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

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

SUBTITLE K-1. SPECIALTY COURTS FOR VICTIMS

CHAPTER 141. SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES COURT PROGRAM

Sec. 141.001. SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES COURT PROGRAM

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

(1) the integration of services provided by public agencies and community organizations for victims in sexual assault cases;

(2) the use of prosecutors with experience in prosecuting sexual assault cases;

(3) early identification and prompt placement of eligible victims in the program;

(4) access by victims to counseling and other related services provided by public agencies and community organizations;

(5) development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations;

(6) monitoring and evaluation of program goals and

1 effectiveness;

2 (7) continuing interdisciplinary education to promote
3 effective program planning, implementation, and operations; and

4 (8) inclusion of a participant's family members who
5 agree to be involved in the services provided to the participant
6 under the program.

7 Sec. 141.002. AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH PROGRAM; ELIGIBILITY.

8 (a) The commissioners court of a county may establish a sexual
9 assault victim services court program for participants who are
10 victims of an alleged sexual assault in which a person is arrested
11 for or charged with an offense under Chapter 21 or 22, Penal Code.

12 (b) The local administrative judge, for the courts for which
13 the judge serves as local administrative judge, may select a court
14 in the county for assignment of cases described by Subsection (a).
15 The prosecuting attorney for the court must have experience in
16 prosecuting sexual assault offenses under Chapter 21 or 22, Penal
17 Code.

18 Sec. 141.003. DUTIES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SERVICES
19 COURT PROGRAM. (a) A sexual assault victim services court program
20 established under this chapter must:

21 (1) ensure that a victim eligible for participation in
22 the program volunteers to proceed through the program; and

23 (2) allow a participant to withdraw from the program
24 at any time.

25 (b) A sexual assault victim services court program
26 established under this chapter shall make, establish, and publish
27 local procedures to ensure maximum participation of eligible

1 victims in the county.

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

6 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.