

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)
Launches Statewide Public Awareness Campaign at Annual Conference**
Advocates, Survivors “Speak Up. Speak Out.” for Increased Awareness

Austin, Texas (February 24, 2003) – With opening remarks from state Attorney General Greg Abbott, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) today launched “Speak Up. Speak Out.” – Texas’ first statewide public awareness campaign against sexual assault – at the beginning of its annual three-day conference in Austin.

“This is a powerful campaign that has been built on a solid foundation of research,” said Attorney General Abbott. “Research has told us that Texans are deeply concerned about the issue of sexual assault. We know that communication leads to prevention, and this campaign encourages talking with partners, friends and family about the issue – speaking up and speaking out.”

A Research-based Campaign

A recent survey of Texans by KRC Research – the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind undertaken by a state to date – found that adults and teenagers are seriously concerned about sexual assault and believe Texas should take the issue more seriously. The survey also found that more than half of all Texans are not even aware of the sexual assault services available to them in their communities.

A separate health survey, conducted by the University of Texas and Texas A&M on the prevalence of sexual assault in the state, also reveals that:

- Most victims are assaulted by a relative or another known male
- Fewer than 1 in 5 assaults are reported to law enforcement officials (20 percent of female and 12 percent of male victims)

“The frequency of sexual assault is increasing at an alarming rate in Texas,” said Annette Burrhus-Clay, TAASA executive director. “Nearly 2 million adult Texans have been sexually assaulted – almost 13 percent of Texas residents. The ‘Speak Up. Speak Out.’ campaign will focus attention on the issue, increasing visibility for our member agency services and calling on Texans to take responsibility for ending sexual assault.”

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Ms. Burrhus-Clay continued, “‘Speak Up. Speak Out.’ is particularly targeted to teens, as our research shows that this group is the most uninformed about the issue – yet, sadly, it is the one most affected by sexual assault. Most victims are females 18 years old and younger. At the same time, the campaign’s reach will be broad in order to inform Texans about the need to stop the violence and learn the facts about sexual assault.”

“Speak Up. Speak Out.” Campaign Elements

The “Speak Up. Speak Out.” campaign includes television, radio and print public service advertisements. Each ad features an actual Texas survivor of sexual assault, talking about her personal story. However, their messages are about hope and healing – survival and recovery, rather than victimization – reinforcing the campaign’s goal to inform the public about sexual assault crisis services and to encourage dialogue across Texas. Ads will run in English and Spanish, beginning in April during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and continuing throughout 2003; specific campaign elements are as follows:

- Paid TV and radio advertising (statewide in April and August)
- TV, radio and print public service announcements placements (throughout the year)
- TV, radio, print and online public relations outreach (throughout the year)
- Coalition building/grassroots efforts (organizations across Texas)

Six remarkable young women, all Texas survivors of sexual assault, are lending their voices and stories to the campaign. Bridget Kelly, Maggie Watson, Eunice Ruiz and Lisa Federer will be featured in television spots. Texans will hear Bridget, Eunice, Maggie and Cathy Ransom on the radio and see Maggie, Eunice, Cathy and Gina Cotroneo’s stories in printed materials.

Additional campaign elements include distributing education materials, assistance in mobilizing member agencies, conducting targeted outreach to schools, initiating additional peer-to-peer training, coalition-building, and securing corporate and media partnerships.

Background on “Speak Up. Speak Out.”

In 2001, TAASA received a \$2 million, two-year grant from the Office of the Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services Program. The grant was awarded to identify Texans’ attitudes towards sexual assault and develop a public awareness campaign around the issue.

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Materials for the "Speak Up. Speak Out." campaign were conceived, designed, developed and produced as a *pro bono* program by the Dallas-based Temerlin McClain advertising agency. Broadcast production services were donated by Moxie Pictures - Bob Purman, Director; Mad River Post; Fast Cuts; The Filmworkers Club; and Clear Channel Communications. Photographic print services were donated by Stewart Cohen Pictures.

About Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is the statewide organization committed to ending sexual violence in Texas. A non-profit educational and advocacy organization based in Austin, TAASA member agencies comprise a statewide network of more than 70 crisis centers that serve rural as well as metropolitan areas. Founded in 1982, the agency has a strong record of success in community education, legal services, youth outreach, law enforcement training, legislative advocacy, and curricula and materials development. Additional information about TAASA can be found at www.taasa.org.

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“Speak Up. Speak Out.” campaign images, artwork, launch event images/photos are available electronically upon request.

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