



The University of Texas at Austin
**Institute on Domestic Violence
& Sexual Assault**
Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Innovating Toward a Visionary Network for Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA)

An Empirical Process to Engage Stakeholders, Apply Relevant Theory,
Recognize Practice Wisdom, Address Liabilities, and Define Desired
Outcomes

Final Evaluation: Report 1 of 2

MARCH · 2019

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Acknowledgements

The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) research team members' express their deep-felt gratitude to the following individuals and organizations for assisting with this evaluation.

The organizations participating in the Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) Network are the unsung heroes for agreeing to share their time and treasures of knowledge with us. These individuals clearly see, in the midst of volumes of complex cases, the need for, value of, and vision toward an assessment lens that required seeing the “forest for the trees.” The organizational staff and administrator's writ large are also Texas' unsung heroes because they are the defenders and pursuers of justice on behalf of their clients in the criminal, civil, and other systems. We honor you multiple times over and thank you for participating in this evaluation and strategic planning process.

In alphabetical order, evaluation participants represented these organizations: Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance, Catholic Charities of Dallas, Equal Justice Center, Legal Aid Society of Lubbock, Lone Star Legal Aid, Tahirih Justice Center, Texas Advocacy Project, Texas Legal Services Center, and Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid.

Erin Martinson, Managing Attorney, Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC), is deserving of a special call out and thanks from us for her competent and supportive grant management. Most projects such as this one depend on the expertise and technical assistance provided by others; TLSC firmly rooted us by providing adept legal assistance. As you would expect, her leadership was so much more as the originator of this evaluation with the intent to identify strengths, build community, and make improvements. A simple thank you seems too little for the gift you are to IDVSA, your peers in the legal community, survivors of interpersonal violence, and the great state of Texas. We are truly appreciative.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) leaders deserve our final comments and acknowledgements. As the fiscal agent, TAJF assumes a tremendous amount of leadership, oversight, and responsibility for legal services provided to sexual assault survivors in the state of

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Texas. In honoring our partnership with the leadership of TAJF, the strategic planning processes have admittedly involved humility, vulnerability, and periods of self-reflection for IDVSA that we have aimed to transform into an experience of growth and learning.

We are particularly grateful to Lisa Melton, Special Projects Manager of TAJF for her keen ability to navigate, negotiate, and be an adept liaison. The state of Texas, legal aid services, and sexual assault survivors are fortunate for her desire to improve the systems and leverage resources.

- We are thankful to Betty Balli Torres, Executive Director of TAJF, for her vision, understanding, and willingness to holistically “represent” Texas survivors and the legal aid service community through her strength and voice.
- Lara O’Toole for her professional editorial skills
- Gabby Fuentes for her support as a Graduate Research Assistant
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HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

IDVSA produced this evaluation report as a tool for TAJF and the LASSA Network, whose roles and responsibilities are to operationalize the visionary network.

The purpose of this report is tri-fold:

1. As a decision-making tool, its elements and structures are best utilized as guidance for an ongoing, engaging, and iterative assessment process.
2. It is a roadmap to provide clarity about next steps, guardrails, and a path forward toward the visionary network.
3. It is a foundational development tool for the LASSA Network and TAJF.

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Based on 2015 research first reported by the Institute of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) at the University of Texas at Austin, sexual assault is a public health problem affecting 6.3 million women and men, or 33.2% of adult Texans over their lifetime. Yet, only 9.2% of those in the study made reports to law enforcement. (Busch-Armendariz, Olaya-Rodriguez, Kammer-Kerwick, Wachter, & Sulley, 2015). Survivors of sexual assault need civil legal remedies, safety, support, and access to justice outside of the criminal justice system. In response, Texas lawmakers during the 2015-2017 biennium allocated \$10 million to Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF) for the purpose of connecting legal aid service providers across the state of Texas.

In 2015, TAJF created the Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) Network and hotline with nine organizations and various legal program specialties within each agency. LASSA provides free, comprehensive statewide legal services to survivors of sexual assault in every Texas county.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK, GOALS, AND METHODS

IDVSA led an evaluation of the LASSA Network. This report details that evaluation process and findings. The evaluation goal was to work in partnership with TAJF and all LASSA Network representatives to assess the network's services, functioning, strengths, and limitations to make improvements, and inform decision makers and funders about the status of legal services in Texas.

The project was guided by IDVSA's research values and principles, Bloom's Taxonomy (1984), and three overarching questions:

1. How does the current network operate and what was the operational vision?
2. Are there existing unmet needs in the current network across the state of Texas?

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3. What elements characterize a strong network?

To inform the evaluation design and implementation, and to answer these questions, the research team collected and analyzed data from primary, existing data sources. This included: an extensive review of existing literature effective networks; LASSA organizational reports and hotline statistics; and meetings, calls, interviews, focus groups, and a two-day strategic planning meeting with LASSA Network members and TAJF representatives. Together, these data offer a rich and layered portrait of the LASSA Network’s performance, priorities, and potential.

FIVE FINDINGS

The LASSA Network collaborative research and evaluation process resulted in five findings:

FINDING 1: STRENGTHS AND LIABILITIES AS A CONTINUUM.

The current LASSA partners are an established “networked nine” striving for an aspirational “visionary network.” The partners include seasoned professionals who are deeply rooted in their communities and committed to quality services. They understand the value of their services, the benefits of formalizing the network, and, most importantly, the potential liabilities inherent with not formalizing the network. Finally, there is a recognition about resistance that comes with change.

FINDING 2: CHANGE IS INTERCONNECTED WITH CREDITABILITY.

Change, even when positive, is a process that takes thoughtful planning and time. Due to the urgency and volume of legal requests, the LASSA Network had limitations during its initial planning and implementation. By understanding this historical context, the network can move forward efficiently and strategically to make improvements. The following sub-findings guide the process:

- A cohesive visionary network improves outcomes and relies on clear communication and organization.
- Build relationships and buy in, leveraging the perspectives of diverse stakeholders.
- Be committed and invested through champions with decision-making power and a foundation of culturally grounded, trauma-informed, and victim-centered values.
- Formalize the process (e.g., through agreements, a meeting schedule, and deadlines) and work to obtain resources.
- Practice courage, vulnerability, and a non-blaming approach.
- Pivot when aspects are not working well.
- Understand that problem solving is a process that takes time and requires thoughtful reflection and collaboration.
- Build in accountability

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FINDING 3: PRAGMATICS IMPROVE UTILITY AND FUNCTIONING.

Stakeholders benefit from further clarification on the purpose of the visionary network, articulating its structure, operations, brand, and decision-making process.

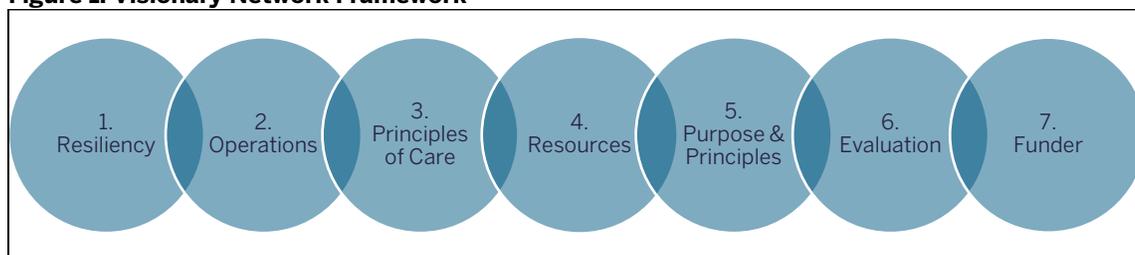
FINDING 4: PROSPECTUS ABOUT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The LASSA Network will benefit from clarity of expectations and roles between the grantor and individual grantees and among grantees themselves as collaborative partners. These expectations should include direction and resources on substantive issues the network faces with regard to complex client needs and overall operations.

FINDING 5: VISIONARY NETWORK FRAMEWORK

The LASSA organizations, also referred to as the “networked nine” in the findings, embraced developing a visionary framework during the strategic planning process. Seven elements define the framework as illustrated below and described in more detail in the strategic planning report.

Figure 1. Visionary Network Framework



THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following three recommendations emerged and are essential in moving the networked nine to the aspirational visionary network.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SEIZE THE MOMENT AND MOTIVATION.

The “networked nine” are invested, poised ready to build the visionary network.

RECOMMENDATION 2: COMMITMENT

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, additional funding and resources, and considerations of the consequences of under resourcing are important.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ALIGNMENT

Professional communications and marketing will align key stakeholders’ perspectives and the network’s essential end users, including promoting one statewide hotline number.

Framework

From September 2017 to December 2018, the IDVSA researchers conducted an evaluation of the LASSA Network focused on its structure, functioning, and legal services to survivors of sexual assault throughout Texas. This report describes the impetus for the evaluation as well as its rigorous design, collaborative process, and results. The strategic recommendations and priorities provided by this project have the potential to guide TAJF and the LASSA Network from a committed, but informal “networked nine” to an aspirational “visionary network” that more efficiently and effectively addresses the critical needs of survivors statewide.

CHARGE TO CREATE A LEGAL SERVICE NETWORK FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

The Supreme Court of Texas provided the structure and collaboration requirement that was ultimately fulfilled by LASSA Network (Supreme Court of Texas, 2017). The Supreme Court language specifically requires grantees to collaborate with organizations in their service area who are providing civil legal aid to survivors of sexual assault and all other community and government organizations that are providing victim-related services.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Bloom's Taxonomy was used as an organizing framework during the strategic planning process (Bloom, 1984). Table 1 on the next page illustrates Bloom's Taxonomy and applies these six elements as used in the LASSA strategic planning process.

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TABLE 1: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Six Taxonomy Elements	Definitions	Example as Applied
Knowledge	New facts or observations are presented	Presentation of evaluation findings
Comprehension	Determining /testing; correctly understanding of concepts	Using the information from the knowledge phase
Application	New information in knowledge phase is integrated or applied	Structure of network
Analysis	Use of scrutiny with feedback loop	Logic model
Synthesis	New ideas are created through connections and intersections.	Development of framework, visionary network, and strategic plan.
Evaluation	Process to assess issues that promote or hinder goal and objective achievement	Systematic gathering of new data – feedback loop

Note. Six taxonomy elements from *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom, 1984).

DEFINITIONS

Scientific approach: Interpretations and findings are derived from data and/or observations. The processes of data collection, methods, and analyses are systematic, transparent, and adhere to human subjects guidelines when appropriate (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Networked nine: A provisional label grounded in the research findings reflective of the current grantees involved in the LASSA evaluation.

Integration (or synthesis): “Putting together elements or parts to form a whole, arranging or combining pieces, parts, elements, and so on, to develop a pattern or structure that was clearly there before...” (Young, 2014, p. 80).

Visionary network: A provisional label given to a preferred outcome as reflective in the evaluation findings and a stated goal of the LASSA grant.

Strategic planning: Results of a decision-making tool for leaders

Strategic planning process: The opportunity to (re)affirm guiding principles and determine preferred outcomes through a series of steps that achieve the items listed in Table 2 on the next page.

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TABLE 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Gather	Listen	Plan
Relevant organizational data	Broadly to internal and external stakeholders	Under current conditions
Analyze relevant allied data	Formally and informally	Forecast future conditions
Understand the responsibility and positionality of unmet needs	For deep understanding	

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Supporting Evidence: Sexual Assault in Texas

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

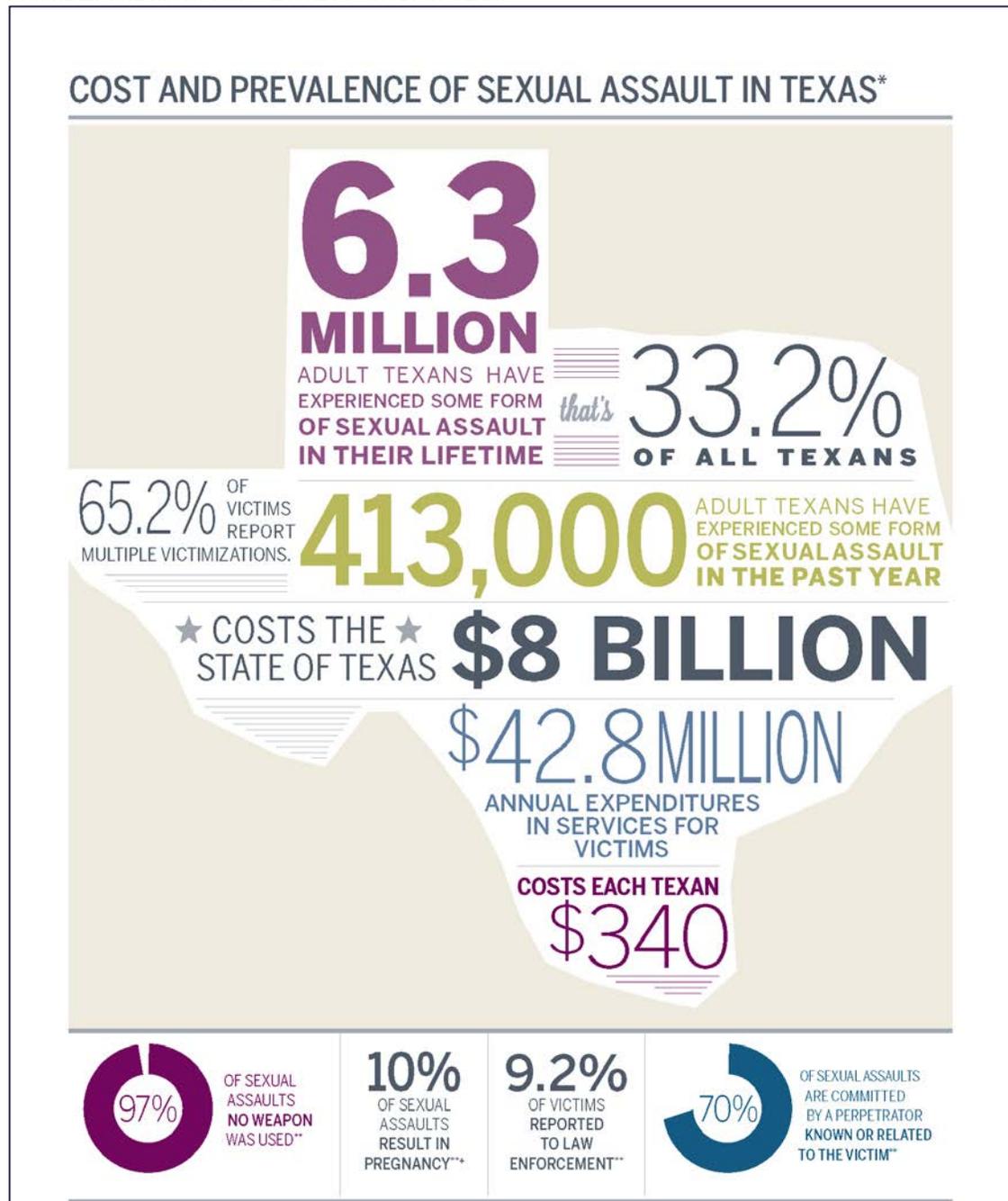
Sexual assault is a concern among women and men and as a public health problem affecting 6.3 million or 33.2% of adult Texans over their lifetime; 413,000 annual sexual assaults in Texas (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015). IDVSA first studied sexual assault prevalence in Texas in 2003, and determined the prevalence to be 1.9 million adult Texans (1,479,912 women and 372,394 men) or 13% of adult Texans reporting lifetime sexual assault victimization (Busch, Bell, DiNitto, & Neff, 2003). Law enforcement reports of sexual assault also differed significantly at 9% of victims reporting in 2015 and 18% reporting in 2003, respectively (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015; Busch, Bell, DiNitto, & Neff, 2003) Innovations in scientific measurement and programmatic efforts likely contributed to the increase in disclosure rates.

Strategies to address sexual assault must include comprehensive, effective, interventions, such as legal services as a critical means of support for survivors. Survivors who reported sexual assault and did not report to law enforcement need legal assistance. Figure 2 below illustrates the impact of sexual assault crimes in the state of Texas (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

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FIGURE 2: THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN TEXAS



Note. Reprinted with permission from, Busch-Armendariz, N.B., Olaya-Rodriguez, D., Kammer-Kerwick, M., Wachter, K. & Sulley C. (2015). *Health and well-being: Texas statewide sexual assault prevalence*. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.

* Costs are based on Busch-Armendariz et al. 2011

** These analyses are based on one victimization that victims chose to describe in detail and not based on all the sexual assaults reported by victims in this survey.

+ These analyses are base upon a small sample size therefore caution is warranted.

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Additional highlights:¹

Impact on Health and Well-Being

- Physical, mental, and emotional problems that limit activities are nearly twice as prevalent among sexual assault victims (41.3%) than among non-victims (26.5%).
- Sexual assault victims are more likely to experience certain medical conditions. Victims are almost twice as likely as non-victims to suffer from asthma (20.9% versus 12.5%), frequent headaches (21% versus 11%), irritable bowel syndrome (9% versus 4.2%), and chronic pain (20.3% versus 9.9%), (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

Alcohol and Drug Use

- Only 14.6% of victims report that they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the sexual assault they chose to discuss.
- Almost 24% of victims reported that the perpetrator was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Victims who were under the influence during the sexual assault reported the use of alcohol only (25.2%) more often than the use of both alcohol and drugs (8.3%) or drugs only (5%), (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

Use of Weapons

- While most sexual assaults do not involve other physical violence, a substantial minority of sexual assaults (14.8% for women and 1.9% for men) do, (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

Reports to Law Enforcement

- Sexual assault continues to be a severely underreported crime. Only 9.2% of victims reported their experience to the police (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

CALL TO ACTION

Progress has been made in efforts to prevent sexual assault, however sexual assault is a crime that continues to affect hundreds of thousands of citizens in Texas. IDVSA research findings (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015) indicate that sexual assault impacts women and men throughout their lifetime. Sexual assault is much more prevalent among women and thus should be considered a major health issue for Texas women. However, the suffering of men and boys as a result of this crime should not be minimized or ignored. Sexual assault has long lasting and potentially negative consequences for all victims. Advances in science and measurement have improved our ability to understand and describe sexual assault victimization over the last

¹ Data on these findings are from follow-up questions to participants who reported sexual assault victimization. The participants were asked if they were willing to talk in more detail about one sexual assault victimization experience.

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decade. Given its prevalence and impact in Texas, benchmarking in more frequent intervals is critical.

RELEVANCE TO THE LASSA NETWORK

In the 2015 research, IDVSA researchers asked survivors about the reasons that they either reported or did not report to law enforcement. Survivors were more likely to report or disclose their victimization to friends (45.3%) or family members (31.5%) (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

The top five reasons survivors/victims did not report to law enforcement are as follows (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015):

1. Did not define their experiences as a crime
2. Were too young to report their victimization to law enforcement
3. Were too scared to report
4. Chose to deal with the sexual assault themselves or ask friends or family for help
5. Felt stupid, ashamed, or embarrassed about what had happened to them

Other reasons they gave were: they wanted to forget about it, did not think they would be believed, were prevented from reporting, thought that reporting might jeopardize their employment, blamed themselves, or worried about jeopardizing their immigration status (Busch-Armendariz, et al., 2015).

LEGAL SERVICES IN TEXAS: IMPETUS AND BACKGROUND

Policy Context

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session (2015-2017), \$10 million was allocated by lawmakers with the expressed aim to develop and connect legal aid service providers across the state of Texas.

These funds come from the Sexually Oriented Business Fee (also known as the “Texas Pole Tax”), which is a tax intended to generate revenue that will underwrite programs to aid victims of sexual assault. TAJF distributed the funds.

Texas Access to Justice Foundation (TAJF)

TAJF was established by the Supreme Court of Texas in 1984 and is the leading funder of civil legal aid in the state. TAJF is charged with allocating, administering, and monitoring funds appropriated specifically to support legal services for victims of sexual assault. TAJF provided funding to Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC) to create a statewide LASSA hotline staffed by attorneys, and it provided funding to eight other legal services grantees across the state of Texas specifically to form a network of partners that could provide comprehensive legal services to

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survivors of sexual assault. The nine programs are referred to as the LASSA Network, and each program receives funds to provide legal services specifically to survivors of sexual assault.

Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA)

Mission

The LASSA Network's mission is to provide a comprehensive statewide delivery system in every Texas county, offering victims of sexual assault a wide range of free legal services – from general advice to holistic, direct representation in civil legal matters stemming from the sexual assault.

Description of Services

Founded in 2015, LASSA specializes in serving victims who cannot find help from traditional service providers; they either do not qualify, or the service providers are out of their reach because of bandwidth, cultural, language, or geographic barriers. LASSA works directly with victims, shelters, rape crisis centers, law enforcement agencies, and courts across Texas to handle the civil legal problems that result from sexual assault, including but not limited to the: provision of civil protective orders; assistance with lease terminations and relocation-related matters; help in obtaining victim compensation and available privacy protections; and other issues impacting victims' rights and recovery.

Victims can call the LASSA statewide hotline for immediate legal advice, information, and referral to the eight legal service organizations in the network who are in turn partnering with local agencies across Texas that support sexual assault survivors. These legal service organizations are expected to actively network with each other and with community-based organizations that provide counseling and social services to victims of sexual assault in order to collectively serve all Texas counties. The organizations in the LASSA Network are listed below and vary in their subspecialties of law and the types of legal services they provide, such as in immigration, refugee services, or sexual harassment in the workplace. Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid serves two-thirds of Texas and has created its own LASSA hotline for those regions to complement the statewide hotline.

- Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance
- Catholic Charities of Dallas
- Equal Justice Center
- Legal Aid Society of Lubbock
- Lone Star Legal Aid
- Tahirih Justice Center
- Texas Advocacy Project
- Texas Legal Services Center
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid

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Trauma-informed LASSA hotline attorneys provide legal advice to survivors, understanding that sexual assault impacts a survivor beyond civil legal remedies with which they present. Given this, attorneys must also be ready to address the holistic, immediate safety and support, or crisis intervention services that survivors need. Ultimately, the broad aim of the network is to connect the state's legal services thereby increasing the efficiency, efficacy, and access of sexual assault legal services.

Impetus for Its Creation

Legal aid services provide free attorney representation, legal advice, and information to low-income residents across issues such as civil rights, environmental justice, labor and employment, public benefits, disaster assistance, federally subsidized housing, wills and estates, border issues, and human trafficking. According to the Justice Index from the National Center for Access to Justice (2016), there is less than one civil legal attorney for every 10,000 people living in poverty. The largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans in the United States is the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). In addition, there are hundreds of independent nonprofit civil legal aid programs that do not receive LSC funds and that may focus on particular populations or issues. In Texas, TAJF is a primary funding source that administers funding for free civil legal assistance to low-income Texans.

The number of people who need legal assistance continues to increase and organizations are making grand efforts to equalize access to justice for low-income individuals who otherwise would not be able to afford an attorney to protect their rights and help meet their basic needs. With recent advances in technology, legal aid telephone hotlines and network partnerships introduce a greater likelihood that individuals will receive legal assistance.

Sexual violence is a violation of one's emotional, psychological, and physical safety. For a relatively small, but not insignificant, number of survivors, attorneys provide legal services that establish or re-establish privacy and safe housing, employment, education, and financial stability. The following are general examples of how attorneys in the LASSA Network may assist survivors of sexual assault:

- Filing for a protective order
- Representation in filing for divorce
- Applying for education services and disability benefits
- Applying for Crime Victims' Compensation
- Assistance in pursuing child custody or child support
- Maintaining the privacy of medical, mental, health, and education records
- Representation in housing authority matters and during eviction proceedings
- Assistance with workers compensation claims
- Help with guardianship, powers of attorney, and wills

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- Negotiations with landlords or to break leases or increase safety
- Representation in sexual harassment and discrimination complaints
- Assistance in immigration matters, including work permits, temporary legal status, and legal permanent residency
- Identification of legal solutions for accessing public and private housing
- Assessment of schools' compliance with state and federal laws
- Assessment of eligibility for public benefits, application assistance, and representation if benefits are denied

The LASSA Network fills a clear need in Texas, offering immediate legal advice and referrals for follow-up legal representation via the statewide hotline and the network partners. In addition, it offers critical services to low-income individuals in a collaborative approach to serving survivors of sexual assault across the state.

THE CURRENT PROJECT

The evaluation will aid the LASSA Network in understanding and improving its services to survivors of sexual assault throughout the state as well as inform decision makers and funders about the additional legal services needed. The purpose of the evaluation was to understand the program structure of LASSA, services provided by partnering agencies and referral resources, the referral process for partnering agencies, and perceptions of the program's effectiveness in serving its clients. By interviewing and engaging members of the network and reviewing existing supplementary data sources, IDVSA researchers gained a better understanding of how LASSA and its network function to serve survivors of sexual assault in Texas. These data provide further information on how to more effectively offer information, services, and referrals for survivors of sexual assault across the state as well as sustain an effective network of organizations.

Methods

The LASSA evaluation project was grounded in the IDVSA guiding research values and principles.

IDVSA'S GUIDING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Our Commitment

IDVSA's aspirational goal is to eliminate interpersonal abuse and violence with social justice as our centering principle. We engage stakeholders in ongoing collaborative decision-making, recognizing that our actions affect their lives, and therefore our expressed values and principles ground the rigorous scientific approaches in our scholarship, education and training, and service.

VALUE 1: LEADERSHIP

We embrace our responsibility as leaders and commit to being deliberate and thoughtful about the internal resistance that undoubtedly accompanies our vision of social change and social justice.

VALUE 2: RESPONSIVENESS

We are reflective about the profound impact the issues we study have in the lives of our citizenry to achieve their life goals, live free of abuse and violence(s), and understand our moral, ethical, and legal responsibilities to remove those barriers.

PRINCIPLE 1: DISCOVERY

We are confident in our ability to build a body of scientific knowledge, including by asking relevant and innovative questions, utilizing the most preeminent scientific techniques and schema, and providing evidence-based, applicable, and actionable recommendations for communities to shape and improve their existing services, programs, and policies.

PRINCIPLE 2: INTERSECTIONAL

We treat each other with respect, particularly when relationships are challenging; we honor each other as learners, particularly when an invitation to join the lives of others is extended; we acknowledge that individuals and communities are unique and diverse,

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particularly in their perceptions, experiences, impact, access to power, and social (in)equality, and we use an evolving and adaptive intersectional lens; our approaches are responsive because the lives of people are complex.

PRINCIPLE 3: COLLABORATIVE

We understand that influencing institutional and systemic behavior change is predicated on solutions from strong leaders with innovative, transformational approaches that involve stakeholders beyond the traditional triad of victim, offender, and responding professional.

IDVSA's research is built on achieving multi-systemic level change (macro, mezzo, and micro levels) that eliminate interpersonal violence and intimate partner abuses. At its center are aspirational and achievable goals determined by a collaborative decision-making model. Research participants are drawn from multidisciplinary perspectives and from the professionals who respond to sexual assault survivors. Findings are developed based on rigorous social science methods, including the analyses of original and secondary data sources. The LASSA research project was grounded in an approach that was responsive, inclusive, collaborative, and empirically driven as well as practice and action-oriented. As always, the safety and well-being of sexual assault survivors remained at the forefront of our work.

We are confident in our ability to build a body of scientific knowledge, including by: asking relevant and innovative questions; utilizing the most preeminent scientific techniques and schema; and providing evidence-based, applicable, and actionable recommendations for communities to shape and improve their existing services, programs, and policies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND LOGIC MODEL

Three overarching research questions with focused sub-questions (prompts) guided the evaluation and data analysis plan. Table 3 illustrates the LASSA Research Evaluation Project logic model.

1. How does the current network operate and what was the operational vision?

Prompts:

- a. What is the mission, goal, and function of the network?
- b. What are its strengths?
- c. Are there limitations to address?
- d. Are there strategic actions and recommendations from stakeholders?

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2. Are there existing unmet needs in the current network across the state of Texas?

Prompts:

- a. What preferred outcomes will better align with the original vision of the 80th Texas Legislature’s House Bill 1751 that was passed in 2007?
 - i. What stakeholder recommendations about “where we should be” will achieve the vision of a network?
- b. What stakeholder recommendations about “where we want to be” will achieve the vision of a network?
- c. What resources will help to achieve these goals?

3. What elements characterize a strong network?

Prompts:

- a. What characterizes a best practice model?
- b. How do these characteristics apply to legal services for sexual assault survivors?
- c. What recommendations and strategies are useful to integrate and achieve a visionary network?

Table 3: LASSA Evaluation Project Logic Model

Purpose	Objectives	Activities	Inputs	Deliverables
To understand and define elements of a “visionary network”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate the existing network model To identify strengths and limitations of the current network model To identify elements or characteristics of best practice network models To engage members in a strategic planning session To clarify next steps that integrate research evidence with original and existing data and learning from the strategic planning session 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Status updates in person, by phone, and by email with TLSC Status updates by phone with TLSC and TAJF representatives Two day, in-person strategic planning meeting with stakeholders from the current network A focus group with members in the current network 15 interviews with current members of the network. Collection, review, and analysis of existing data 	<p><i>Primary Data Collected</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participant interviews focus groups, and meetings Strategic planning meeting information Process data from meeting notes, legislative and court hearings, observations, and interactions <p><i>Secondary and Existing Data Collected</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review Secondary and existing data provided to LASSA by organizations (e.g., annual and grant reports) Annual reports of LASSA hotline statistics 	<p><i>Two Reports</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Final Evaluation Report Strategic Planning Report <p>Both reports are tools for TAJF and the LASSA Network to utilize as tools to assess progress, strengths, limitations, and strategies for next steps</p>

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DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The nine (n = 9) Texas legal service organizations that are part of the LASSA Network participated in this evaluation and strategic planning process. Eighteen (n = 18) professionals voluntarily participated in interviews or in a focus group. All were staff members of LASSA Network organizations.

To protect participants' anonymity given that only a few individuals and eight organizations belong to the LASSA Network, no identifying demographic information was collected.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AND PARTICIPANT CONSENT

TLSC provided potential participants with information about the evaluation and its overall aim. They had the opportunity to participate or decline without the decision affecting their relationship with the funder. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Texas at Austin initially reviewed the study and determined that, "it [the study] did not meet the criteria for human subjects research as defined in the Common Rule (45 CFR 46) or FDA Regulations (21 CFR 56). IRB review and oversight is not required because the activities involve: Program evaluation where results are not generalized to other services or programs." (Dr. James Wilson, personal communication, December 15, 2017).

DATA AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

This section describes the reports data collection, procedures, and analyses. The LASSA evaluation project involved a literature review, existing organizational data, as well as primary data. IDVSA researchers applied a strategic and rigorous data review and analysis process to all data collected.

Extent Literature Review

Members of the research team conducted a literature search in social science and law journals on the topics of networking models, legal aid services, provider guidelines and best practices, and trauma informed care for sexual assault and interpersonal violence survivors. The extant literature informed the overall evaluative structure and approach. See Appendix A for the list of topics included in the literature review. The two-day Strategic Planning Process utilized the literature most relevant to the evaluation goal of determining the "visionary network" (See Appendix B).

Organizational Documents

Researchers gathered and analyzed several types of existing documents from the LASSA's nine participating networked organizations including: the original grant applications, required quarterly and annual reports submitted to TAJF, LASSA hotline data, and information publicly available on each organization's website.

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Quantitative and qualitative data were included in original grant applications and grant reports, and the qualitative data included outputs such as the number of counties served, client services provided, hotline calls, referrals, and cases opened. Qualitative data included case stories that often described remarkable individual or family life circumstances and legal assistance and counsel supported by the LASSA grant.

Primary Data Collection

The IDVSA research team facilitated, observed, and participated in interviews and meetings with key project stakeholders. As discussed in the next section, they took and analyzed process notes and recordings from each.

- 1. Initial Planning Interviews.** Researchers met with stakeholders at the outset of the project to benchmark an understanding the project's scope and major aims. Researchers interviewed a representative from TLSC and TAJF in-person and by phone to develop the overall evaluation plan and an interview protocol.
- 2. Staff Retreat Observation.** Researchers attended the TLSC retreat to learn about staff perceptions, activities, and objectives for the LASSA Statewide Hotline and referrals to LASSA Network Partners. (See Appendix C for the Retreat Observation Protocol.)
- 3. Interviews and Focus Group with Participants.** As previously mentioned, researchers interviewed individually or in a focus group eighteen staff (n = 18) working in one of the nine the networked organizations. Using the interview protocol described below, researchers asked a series of questions to understand the existing network as well as its strengths, resources, and preferred outcomes. (Appendix D includes the final interview protocol used.)
- 4. Strategic Planning Process.** Members of the research team planned and hosted a two-day strategic planning meeting in December 2018. During this meeting, they collected a variety of data. The Texas Access to Justice Foundation LASSA Evaluation Strategic Planning Meeting Report details those data collection processes, findings, and recommendations more fully.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Development of Protocols: Interviews, Focus Groups, and Observations

IDVSA researchers collected information to be able to assess a wide variety of phenomenon. The assessment tools fit the project logic model and were specific to focus on what stakeholders thought about sexual assault survivors' legal aid service needs, network partnerships, and data sharing. Assessment tools were piloted with representatives (n = 3) for comprehension and flow.

Interview and Focus Group Data Analysis Procedures

The evaluation questions were exploratory in nature, so researchers used an empirical qualitative research methodology using content and thematic analysis techniques. Researchers

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recorded all of the interviews digitally and took copious process notes and notes on the interview protocol. All interview notes and files were then uploaded onto a secure server. Researchers checked process notes taken during the interviews against the digital recording before deleting them.

The first phase of coding included open, line-by-line coding of the transcripts by the research team. The next stage of coding included axial coding, where codes were grouped into large properties or “chunking” categories by conceptual significance and similarity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The third phase included focused coding, concepts to broader contextual themes (Charmaz, 2006). From this, researchers established a codebook (see Appendix E) and used to code the remaining transcripts. The final phase of coding included a focused coding phase was conducted with the entirety of the research team present to discuss areas of alignment and divergence in understanding of the emerging themes around the evaluation questions. The codes were presented to the entire research team for agreement before they were used to code this analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The project team collectively confirmed the results by reviewing them against direct interview quotes, follow up discussion, and confirmatory statements made during the strategic planning process.

Hotline Data Analysis Procedures

Hotline data were sorted, grouped, and organized into categories and descriptive analysis were used to analyze these data. As stated previously there is potential to utilize these data for planning and network development.

Appendix F is the abbreviated Methods handout provided at the Strategic Planning Meeting.

Findings

IDVSA used a series of evidence-based network models drawn from premier social science public health and business literature as an important element of framework development and to guide framework thinking (see Appendix B). Three network examples were presented as a part of the strategic planning processes and facilitators gave the nine LASSA Network organizations the opportunity to apply the same concepts to their own networks.

The LASSA evaluation project resulted in five overarching findings. Each finding is listed and expanded upon below. Findings 1 and 2 have several sub-findings, which can be found in the next section, Detailed Findings. In addition, IDVSA provides hotline call findings and analysis directly subsequent to the detailed findings.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Research Finding 1. Strengths and liabilities as a continuum.

Strengths and liabilities are on a continuum, and strengths can become liabilities if they are not appropriately structured and guided. The original networked nine¹ understood the importance of the network and of coming together to provide legal services to survivors of sexual assault. These original organizations, which existed prior to the formation of LASSA, are deeply rooted in their communities and are committed to providing services. However, the individuality of these organizations and the informality of their network can become a liability without appropriate and purposeful planning. That planning will allow the networked nine to become the aspirational visionary network.²

¹ A provisional label grounded in the research findings reflective of the current grantees involved in the LASSA evaluation

² Term is a research-grounded label generated from the current evaluation. It also reflects the charge by the Supreme Court of Texas (Section 8.1) and describes the goal of the funding in TJAF Request for Proposal (Supreme Court of Texas, 2017).

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Research Finding 2. Change is interconnected with creditability.

It is well known that change is a process, not an event. Even when change is recognized as positive, influencing change takes thoughtful planning and time. While the importance of strategic planning and project implementation is well documented, it is work that rarely gets funded. This was the case for the LASSA project, in large part because of the urgency and volume of cases, as with many legal and social services provided to low income and marginalized groups. Research indicates that project success often hinges on successful planning and thoughtful implementation of plans.

Research Finding 3: Pragmatics improve utility and functioning.

Stakeholders in this evaluation will benefit from further clarifying the purpose of the visionary network, articulating its structure, operations, and decision-making process. Additional infrastructure expectations such as branding (individual vs. organizational) are useful, and deliverables, products, standards of service, and additional accountability standards should also be defined. Establishing a visionary network using a logic model will assist networked partners in making these pragmatic connections.

Research Finding 4: Prospectus about roles and responsibilities.

Clarity of expectations between the grantor with individual grantees, and between grantees themselves as collaborative partners, is needed. The visionary network should include a diversified group of individuals from the grantee organizations, and the roles and responsibilities of these partners should be fully articulated. As the grantor, TAJF has important decision-making authority; networked organizations also have decision-making abilities and responsibilities as grantees, and each of these should be articulated.

Expectations should also cover substantive issues, such as who is responsible for resource provision (i.e., how-to guides and toolkits) on topics such as:

- How to track and share client information
- Elements of a “good” referral
- Trauma-informed care: A primer for legal aid lawyers
- Documentation 101 for legal aid lawyers
- Technology trouble(shooting) in legal aid
- Lawyers and social workers: A match made in heaven or a match made in purgatory?

There are also more complex issues that impact this work that must be addressed. It is important to understand that hotline clients present legal needs, but rarely are those their only needs. People have complex lives, and these clients are no exception. Perhaps legal aid clients using networked services have more complex bio-psycho-social needs and require intervention from a licensed social worker more than other sexual assault victims. However, the LASSA grant does not support the intersection of social work and legal services, and some grantees may not have

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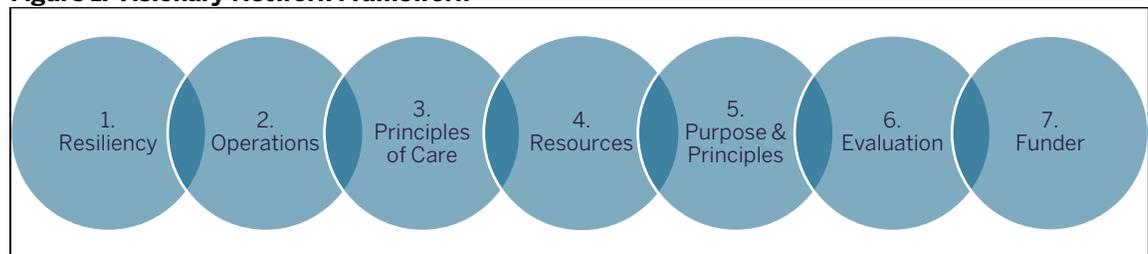
the funding to provide those intersecting support services.¹ As a result, organizations can face fatigue, burnout, and an inability to retain their most seasoned lawyers. This finding will help the visionary network build on the current existing resiliency research that focuses on changing organizational structures, policies, and practices, and not individual practitioners.

Research Finding 5: The visionary network framework.

IDVSA researchers synthesized evaluation project findings to develop the Visionary Network Framework (see Figure 1 below). During the Strategic Planning Meeting, the representatives from the nine organizations worked together to identify the core components of each element and prioritize actionable next steps. The current network members worked diligently and with great enthusiasm on this model. They took ownership of the activities put before them.

The *LASSA Evaluation Strategic Planning Meeting* report further elaborates on each element of this framework. The most important message from the networked nine during that process was the need for clarity of roles as well as continued support and interaction.

Figure 1: Visionary Network Framework



¹ These evaluation data support this finding; however, it is limited to the current study and there is no claim for all legal aid clients.

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DETAILED FINDINGS

Research Findings 1 and 2 above include additional details discussed at length during the LASSA Evaluation Strategic Planning Meeting. These additional details are provided below:

Research Finding 1. Strengths and liabilities as a continuum.

The table below illustrates how strengths and liabilities for the LASSA Network lie on a continuum.

Table 4: Strengths and Liabilities as a Continuum

Strengths <i>visionary network</i>	Strengths <i>networked nine</i>	Liabilities <i>the continuum</i>
1.1 Participants understand the importance of legal services in the lives of sexual assault survivors and are highly committed to meeting those needs across the state.	1.3 The <i>networked nine</i> organizations are deeply rooted in their communities and committed to providing quality services.	1.6 Change is often resisted, even when it is also recognized and embraced
1.2 The <i>visionary network</i> recognizing the benefits of formalizing support among and between <i>networked nine</i> and the potential hazards of not doing so.	1.4 The <i>networked nine</i> pre-date the <i>visionary network</i> ; these grantees are genuinely joined by long-term relationships and their professional dependability.	1.7 The informality of <i>networked nine</i> transforms to a liability without between and among purposive planning.
	1.5 The <i>networked nine</i> is maintained by seasoned, competent, and committed professionals	1.8 TAJF depended on the strength of <i>networked nine</i> , these seasoned professionals, to establish operational systems.

Research Finding 2: Change is interconnected with credibility.

As touched on earlier, influencing change is interconnected with credibility. TAJF and the networked nine improve their credibility with each other by understanding historical and current mistakes only as a non-blaming learning approach such that the ultimate aim is to improve and move forward legal services for sexual assault survivors in the most expedited ways. The goal should be to improve legal services for sexual assault survivors so that those services are efficient and effective in addressing the needs.

2.1 A COHESIVE VISIONARY NETWORK WILL IMPROVE OUTCOMES

A networked approach contributes to successful problem-solving and decision-making. Although this approach requires time, effort, and two-way communication, people learn by listening for understanding (without judgement) to the perspectives of their colleagues about approaches to client needs, geographical trends, and research. The positive final network outcome cannot be understated.

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Organized network meetings held by conference call is often expected. In person meetings of smaller visionary working sub-networks will also be valuable. These modalities allow network members to gather information, share expertise, and strengthen relationships. This regular, formal contact ensures that organizations are not working in isolation without understanding each other. It provides collaborations to allow the visionary network to grow in unexpected ways and make informed decisions about change and the future.

2.2 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND BUY-IN.

Support and buy-in at every level is essential. It is important to maintain consistency in the visionary network and also to gain support from leaders across all participating organizations. This is an essential element for success when making policy, process, and procedural changes, and for obtaining additional project resources. It is also important that the visionary network be made of individuals who represent different “ranks” in their agencies and bring different perspectives (e.g., front line and administrative staff brought important aspects to the discussions in our evaluation).

2.3 BE COMMITTED AND INVESTED.

The visionary network should be comprised of professionals committed to providing exemplary legal assistance to sexual assault survivors in the state of Texas. The visionary group will benefit from “champions” who persistently seek to understand and define the problem. Some of these champions must hold formal leadership positions with decision-making authority, while others must lead through the implementation of action plans. The work must be grounded in the value of providing competent, culturally grounded and informed practices, including those that are trauma-informed and victim-centered.

2.4 FORMALIZE THE PROCESS AND WORK TO OBTAIN RESOURCES.

The organizations involved in the LASSA project have benefitted from the TAJF grant funding and can be stronger by diversifying their funding structures. Legal aid work is time consuming and cases are abundant; thus, organizations should seek additional external funding to achieve a sustainable balance. Continuing to formalize mechanisms, like a memorandum of understanding (MOU), regularly scheduled meetings, and deadlines for tasks, will facilitate the visionary network’s goals and objectives. NOTE: having resources will not replace any of the other critical key elements on this list. Should TAJF’s support expand to include strategizing other grant resources?

2.5 PRACTICE COURAGE AND VULNERABILITY.

Reflection and progress for the LASSA Network should never entail blaming and finger pointing. The approach should be one of understanding historical and recent mistakes. A non-blaming approach to learning will help move the ultimate aims for improved legal services for sexual assault survivors forward in the most expedited ways. This strategy

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also served to improve our credibility and communication among the other stakeholders such as other victim services, funders, and the larger community.

2.6 MAKE CHANGES.

There are many group-based projects that do not produce actual, positive results. The LASSA Network, however, is now poised to take action. The meetings and discussions that were part of this evaluation project were never intended to be the end results, but will help the visionary network achieve its objectives, focus its work, and facilitate change.

Throughout the evaluation process, LASSA Network participants shared information about what was and was not working, and what needs existed. By doing so, they are in a better position to take action and make recommended changes.

2.7 UNDERSTAND PROBLEM-SOLVING IS A PROCESS.

The visionary network will work together on a process of analysis, decision-making, action, and assessment. We begin with the idea that the best responses occurs when they are based on a good understanding of the problem and its context. We do not rush to make changes or fail to make changes without first understanding the situation. This means we have to do research; we had to collect, interpret, and share information (data). This has and will require honesty, good communication, and a willingness to share data. Throughout this (sometimes tedious) process the visionary network should maintain its focus on the ultimate goal of improving services for victims.

2.8 BUILD IN ACCOUNTABILITY.

The visionary network understands the need for a formalized and maintained network of legal services for sexual assault survivors across the state of Texas. It is imperative going forward to retain accountability among members of the visionary network that is being developed.

RESEARCH FINDING: HOTLINE CALL FINDINGS

IDVSA researchers received and analyzed data on the LASSA hotline calls received between October 2015 and September 2018. Table 5 summarizes these data. No call data is available for the last six months of the evaluation period.

Table 5: Snapshot of LASSA Hotline Call Referrals

Month/Year	Calls to the hotline*	Cases opened	Referrals to network partners**
Oct 2015 – Sept 2016	758	666	121 referrals
Oct 2016 – Sept 2017	986	847	156 referrals
Oct 2017 – Sept 2018	1283	895	108 referrals
Oct 2018 – Sept 2019	N/A	243	32 referrals

Note: These data were provided by TAJF, which indicated that these records were provided by TLSC.

* Number of people LASSA hotline attorney talked to

** Number of cases LASSA hotline attorneys referred to network partners

Summary

- There is a 41% increase in calls from year one to year three.
- Hotline is a gateway for disclosure. Survivors report that, during calls to the hotline, they shared their histories of sexual assault for the first time.
- While 90% of callers do not require a referral to a network partner, the hotline, as single point of entry, serves as an important resource for survivors.
- A portion of survivors had their immediate needs met through the initial phone call, while others needed referrals for more in-depth legal representation.
- Hotline data collection needs to systematically capture more sophisticated data to understand its usefulness and importance.

Table 6: Aggregate Hotline Data

Program Name	Number of new cases opened since the beginning of the grant period	Non-intimate partner sexual assault survivors served (closed cases only)	Intimate partner sexual assault survivors served (closed cases only)
<i>All LASSA Grantees</i>	4,123	1,263	3,477
The Cabrini Center	286	46	37
Catholic Charities of Dallas	170	56	212
Equal Justice Center	45	30	4
Legal Aid Society of Lubbock	423	55	312
Lone Star Legal Aid	602	442	1,328
Tahirih Justice Center	129	43	47
Texas Advocacy Project	653	11	537
Texas Legal Services Center	1,040	241	763
Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid-Northwest	170	62	47
Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid-Southwest	610	277	190

Note: These data cover the October 2015 to March 2017 time period and were provided by TAJF, which indicated that these records were provided by TLSC.

Table 6 illustrates the number of survivors who received legal assistance from the LASSA Network since the beginning of the grant period and reveals significant information about how survivors are accessing services and the relationship between the survivor and the offender. The lack of contextual information and feedback interferes with any meaningful analysis.

Routine reporting is a useful and judicious practice that communicates expectations, assesses for compliance, and ensures that accountability standards are met. TAJF met these objectives. Reporting (quarterly, annual, and or strategic), if done well, is also an opportunity for organizational leaders to reflect and (re)affirm the organization’s vision, mission, goals, and the procedures and or systems to achieve those aims. However, these data were not optimally used. The collected data could have been used for multiple purposes. If the grantees had access to

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aggregate level data they would have the opportunity to use it as a whole and more readily analyze patterns, create new connections, and generate new ideas to serve their constituents better. The collection and sharing of data can be improved to allow the network partners to respond and adapt more quickly, identify patterns and issues thereby developing a more coordinated response.

Recommendations

The LAASA Network research, evaluation, and strategic planning process clearly indicates that stakeholders must embrace the Visionary Network Framework. The following three recommendations are essential in moving the networked nine to the aspirational visionary network.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SEIZE THE MOMENT AND MOTIVATION.

The “networked nine” are invested, poised ready to build the visionary network.

RECOMMENDATION 2: COMMITMENT

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, additional funding and resources, and considerations of the consequences of under resourcing are important.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ALIGNMENT

Professional communications and marketing will align key stakeholders’ perspectives and the network’s essential end users, including promoting one statewide hotline number.

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Appendix A

Literature Review Topics

The following topics were researched as part of the literature review:

- Legal aid
- Trauma-informed care
- Legal aid and legal services for survivors of sexual assault
- Telephone-based legal assistance
- Evaluating telephone-based legal assistance
- Effective coalitions
- Evaluating ecosystem investments

Busch-Armendariz, N., Bassett, M., Susswein, M., Wasim, A., & Garcia, K. (2019). Innovating toward a visionary network for legal aid for survivors of sexual assault (LASSA): An empirical process to engage stakeholders, apply relevant theory, recognize practice wisdom, address liabilities, and define desired outcomes. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.

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Appendix B

Structure of Networks Handout - Strategic Planning Meeting

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Structure of Networks

Background

Social networks are defined by the relationships between individuals, groups, or entities. Rather than focusing on a specific actor, the social network focuses on the connections or ties between actors to understand how the system functions. There are three primary types of social networks (Foster & Charles, 2017):

- Egocentric focuses on one specific actor as it relates to the larger system of actors. A visual representation would be of a hub with spokes to a wheel.
- Whole or sociocentric focuses on the mapping of relationships within a certain boundary. This is usually a specific grouping (e.g. a school, agencies serving children, public works in a city)
- Open networks do not have clearly defined boundaries. They may or may not be noticed as network or operate as an informal network.

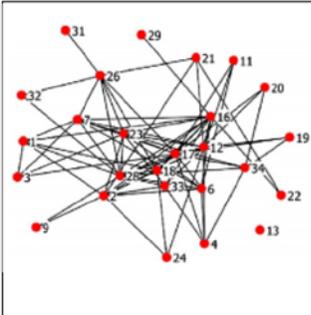
Networks can also be understood by the types of problems they seek to address (Roberts-Degennaro, 2008):

- Information and resource sharing coalitions collect and disseminate information and create mechanisms for referrals between agencies.
- Technical assistance coalitions work to improve the internal functioning of organizations and provide trainings and resources as needed in order to do so.
- Self-regulating coalitions set standards and monitor members' adherence to them.
- Planning and service coordination coalitions do what the name suggests to develop and maintain relationships between different groups.
- Advocacy coalitions monitor the policy making process and raise awareness about the effects on others.

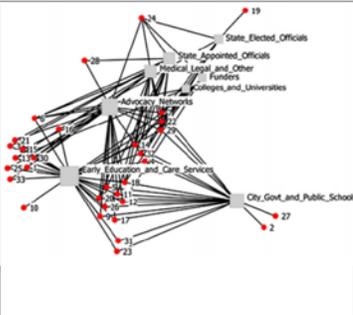
Frequently, service networks focus on several of these areas and include them as primary objectives or goals.

Networks Visualized

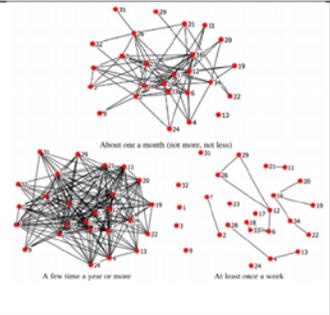
Networks can be visualized in a variety of ways depending on the goals of network analysis, the structure of the network, and the connections between each entity. Several examples of how to think about these networks can be found in Hoppe & Reinelt (2010):



p. 602 Core/periphery structure



p. 611 Collaboration of network by sector type



p. 607 Frequency of communication

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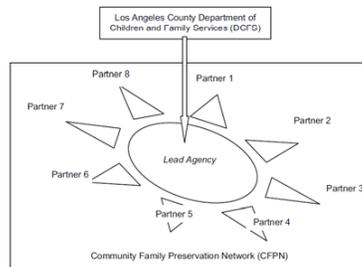
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Case Examples

The Family Preservation Program

Graddy, E. A. & Chen, B. (2006). Influences on the size and scope of networks for social service delivery, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16 (4), 533-552.

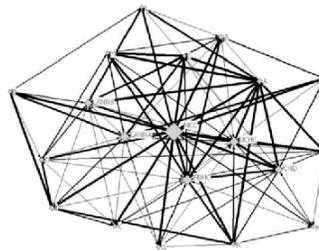
The Family Preservation Program in Los Angeles is one of the largest system of networks funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services to promote collaboration between the community and public and private human service providers. Comprised of approximately 30 individual networks grouped by geographic regions, these networks vary greatly in composition and size. In an evaluation of these networks, researchers found that more service-intensive contracts displayed higher levels of interagency collaboration and encouraged more integrated service provision. This network is primarily an information and technical assistance coalition with some elements of the other categories. Due to the distribution of funding to a primary contracted agency to subcontract with community and service partners, the authors visualized the networks as follows (p. 540):



The Tampa Bay Community Cancer Center Network (TBCCN)

Luque, J., Tyson, D., Lee, J., Gwede, C., Vadaparampil, S., Noel-Thomas, S., & Meade, C. (2010). Using social network analysis to evaluate community capacity building of a regional community cancer network. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(5), 656-668.

The Tampa Bay Community Cancer Center (TBCCN) evaluation focused on whether the process of engaging in collaboration with other agencies enhanced trust between community partners. The evaluation found that having a strong central organization (the cancer center) provided direction and greater centrality to the nature of the network ties (p. 12). Generally, trust increased over time within the network across partners, with some variation for agencies outside of the geographical region nearest the central agency. The authors suggest that central organizations must have consistent funding to sustain the network as a whole and networks should develop outreach for agencies further from network hubs.



Additional Citations:

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Appendix C

TLSC Retreat Observation Protocol

**Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) Network Evaluation:
TLSC Retreat Observation Protocol**

November 10, 2017

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How is TLSC organized?
2. What are the organizational strengths of TLSC?
3. How will the strengths of TLSC benefit the building of the network?

Busch-Armendariz, N., Bassett, M., Susswein, M., Wasim, A., & Garcia, K. (2019). Innovating toward a visionary network for legal aid for survivors of sexual assault (LASSA): An empirical process to engage stakeholders, apply relevant theory, recognize practice wisdom, address liabilities, and define desired outcomes. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.

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Appendix D

Interview/Focus Group Guide – Multidisciplinary Professionals

Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) Network Evaluation Interview/Focus Group Guide –Multidisciplinary Professionals

CONSENT SCRIPT

Thank you so much for speaking with me today and for taking time out of your busy schedule. I know you received some information about the evaluation, but I would like to review some information about the study before we get started.

As you may already know, one of the evaluation goals of the LASSA Network Evaluation is to interview the core members of this project to gain a better understanding of how LASSA and its network function to serve survivors of sexual assault in Texas. Therefore, it is extremely helpful to have you share your expertise regarding your program, coordination with partnering agencies, and service delivery. Specifically, I will be asking you to share your perception about the network's effectiveness in service delivery and provision. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Margaret Bassett at margaret.bassett@austin.utexas.edu.

This interview should take approximately one hour to complete. If it is okay with you, I would like to record this interview for my own use in coding the interview later on—it's going to be hard for me to get everything down on paper, so the recorder can help me later on filling in anything I might have missed. The only people who might listen to this recording will be the research team members on this project. When we have completed coding the interview, the recording will be destroyed. Are you okay with me recording the interview?

Yes
No

Everything we discuss today is private—your name will not be connected to anything you say. Your name will not be placed on this interview. As we're going through the interview, if you need to take a break or stop, just let me know. If there are any questions that you don't want to answer, just say so, and I will move on to the next section. You do not have to answer all of the questions in this interview.

Do you confirm you are at least 18 years old and consent to being interviewed as part of the LASSA Evaluation?

Yes
No

Do you have any questions before we start?

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I am going to verify some information with you about your agency.

1. What is the name of your organization/agency?
 - Catholic Charities of Dallas
 - Equal Justice Center
 - Legal Aid Society of Lubbock
 - Lone Star Legal Aid
 - St. Frances Cabrini Center
 - Tahirih Justice Center
 - Texas Advocacy Project
 - Texas Legal Services Center
 - Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
2. Position Name or Title:
3. In which city is the office you work in located?
 - Austin
 - Dallas
 - Houston
 - Lubbock
 - Unsure/Other, Please describe:
4. Please describe the geographic coverage/region that your agency oversees.
5. Do you have a specific population you serve? If so, please describe.
Potential probes: Are there any underserved populations or groups your agency works with (e.g. youth, homeless/transient, LGBTQ, immigrants)? Does your agency have any requirements for receiving services?
6. Which languages does your agency provide services in?
 - English
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - Vietnamese
 - Arabic
 - French
 - Russian
 - Alaskan Native
 - Unsure/Other, Please describe:
7. What does your agency do when a client needs services in a language that is not regularly provided?

8. What is the number of LASSA calls or referrals received in a month, if known (on average - estimate)?
- <10
 - 10-25
 - 25-50
 - >50

BACKGROUND OF POSITION

Next, I would like to ask you about your position within the organization.

1. How long have you worked in (*organization name*)?
 - <1 year
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - >10 years
 - Declined to answer
2. How long have you held your current position?
 - <1 year
 - 2-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - >10 years
 - Declined to answer
3. Did you need any qualifications or experience requirements for this role?
4. What are your position's primary responsibilities?
5. Do you have any other titles or responsibilities within the organization?

DETAILED AGENCY QUESTIONS

I would like to ask you some questions about your agency or organization. These questions are not specific to your program's involvement with the LASSA Network.

1. Can you briefly describe your organization or agency?
2. What is the approximate size or number of people working at your agency? Could you describe the agency structure?
3. What do you think your agency does really well? Are there any strengths or areas that you think this agency excels at?
4. Are there any resources or programs that you think this agency would benefit from?

5. Could you describe the supervision structure within the agency?
(Potential probes: How often do you meet with a supervisor/supervisee? If you need guidance, can you quickly receive it or have a question answered?)
6. Are there any gaps in supervision or personnel? Please explain.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure/Other, Please describe:
7. Do you feel like you have adequate time to handle your caseload? *(If supervising, does your staff/supervisee?)*
8. Do you feel like you have adequate resources to handle your caseload? *(If supervising, does your staff/supervisee?)*

LASSA NETWORK

In this section I would like to ask you about service to sexual assault survivors as part of the LASSA Network.

1. Are you responsible for working with clients referred by the LASSA Network or do you receive funds to take clients through the LASSA Network as part of your position?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure/Other, please describe
2. What information do you receive about clients and/or cases when a case is referred to you?
3. How do you receive this information?
 - Phone call
 - Meeting
 - Email
 - Electronic database
 - Unsure/Other, Please describe:
4. Approximately how many days after receiving a referral will a client speak with you or someone at your agency?
 - < 1 day
 - 2-4 days
 - 5-7 days
 - 8-10 days
 - 11-14 days
 - > 14 days
 - Declined to answer
5. What measures are in place in your agency to ensure that timely referrals are occurring?

6. Are there any circumstances in which you cannot take on or accept cases from the LASSA network?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Other, please describe:

[CONDITION: If “Yes” is selected -> Display next three questions]

7. Could you describe reasons why a case could not be accepted?

8. If someone does not meet the requirements for service, do you have other agencies you refer to? If yes, who?

9. Is LASSA informed if a case could not be accepted? If so, how quickly after?

10. Could you describe a typical first conversation with a client and what information and services are provided?

11. Is there a standard follow-up procedure with clients? Could you describe what happens next?

12. Within your agency, approximately how many times does a sexual assault survivor have to provide an account of their victimization or experience, if any?

- None/ N/A
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four times or more
- Declined to answer

13. What does ideal service provision to a survivor of sexual assault look like? Could you describe a best outcome or case example?

14. Do you perceive any gaps in policies or procedures for serving sexual assault survivors? Do you have any recommendations for improvement in service delivery?

15. Did you have any training for working with with survivors of sexual assault? If so, could you describe the training and when it occurs?

16. Are there any supports or resources you would like to receive as part of the LASSA network? Please describe.

17. How would you describe the climate or attitudes in working with survivors of sexual assault? Are there any best practices, attitudes, or beliefs that individuals in your organization holds about sexual assault victims?

18. Do you think these beliefs have changed over time? If so, how?

5 / 7

DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING

Next, I would like to ask you questions about how your organization generally gathers and shares information.

1. Is there any information or feedback provided to the LASSA Network during or after a case?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure/Other, Please describe:

[CONDITION: If “Yes” is selected -> Display next question]

2. How often do you provide information or feedback to the LASSA network? Under what circumstances does this occur?
3. Are there any outreach efforts to inform the public/community about the LASSA network? Please describe.
4. How does your organization work/collaborate with other agencies? What does this collaboration look like?
5. How is client information shared with other agencies? Are there any recommendations for improving shared information?
6. Do you have any recommendations or thoughts for improving communication between agencies in the LASSA Network? Are there any areas where you think things could be streamlined or improved?
7. Does (*organization name*) have methods in place to regularly receive client feedback?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure/Other, please describe:
8. Does (*organization name*) have methods in place to regularly receive employee feedback?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure/Other, please describe:
9. Would you mind sharing any standard forms, data collection materials, and/or client tracking databases or software your agency uses with us? *Prompt: We can have these emailed after our interview. A screenshot or scan would work to help understand the information gathered and tracked by each agency. This can include feedback forms for clients and/or employees, when applicable.*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thank you for sharing with me your thoughts about your work. This section is a time for you to share any other important information pertaining to this study.

1. How do you think sexual assault survivors feel in working with your organization? How do you think they feel about the referral process?
2. Are there any other major strengths or weaknesses of your organization in working with sexual assault survivors that you have not previously mentioned?
3. How would you recommend we contact or speak with a survivor from your agency as part of this assessment?

Appendix E

Abbreviated Code Book

LASSA Abbreviated Code Book

Launch or History of LASSA

- Competition for funding
- Historical trust

Structure

- Eligibility
- Data/Client management
- Referral
- Feedback

Communication

- Name
- Networking
- Collaboration

Trauma-Informed Care

Service Types

- Pockets of expertise
- Holistic Services

Politics

- Recent Election
- Cultural
- Societal

Recommendations for Improvement by Participant

Case Examples

Good Quote

Busch-Armendariz, N., Bassett, M., Susswein, M., Wasim, A., & Garcia, K. (2019). Innovating toward a visionary network for legal aid for survivors of sexual assault (LASSA): An empirical process to engage stakeholders, apply relevant theory, recognize practice wisdom, address liabilities, and define desired outcomes. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.

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Appendix F

Abbreviated Methods Handout – Strategic Planning Meeting



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Methods

Guiding Principles of the LASSA Network Evaluation

1. Responsive, inclusive, collaborative, and empirically driven.
2. Practice and action-oriented.
3. Sexual assault survivors' safety and well-being at the forefront.

Research Questions

The LASSA Network Evaluation was guided by two (2) overarching research questions, with focused questions under each that guided a detailed analysis. Find the research questions listed below.

1. What are the considerations for building a visionary network to meet the needs of sexual assault survivors across the state of Texas?

Prompts

- 1.a What are the best practices for networked models?
- 1.b What are current conditions?
- 1.c What are preferred outcomes for alignment with the State of Texas?

2. How do stakeholders envision the visionary network?

Prompts

- 2.a What are the current perceptions of the network?
- 2.b What are the needs and recommendation for building on and improving the current network?
- 2.c What are the strategic actions and recommendations?

Data Collection

1. Review of legal aid service models for survivors of sexual assault. The research team culled the research from social science journals, law journals, network evaluation guidelines, legal aid service provider guidelines, and best practices for serving survivors of sexual assault, including intimate partners. The findings from this search informed the evaluative approach.

2. Meetings with TLSC's LASSA program and attendance of staff retreat. Early in the project's development, the PI met with leadership of the TLSC's LASSA program to gather background information on the development and goals of the LASSA Network. Our GRA attended the TLSC LASSA retreat to learn about staff perceptions, activities, and objectives for working at the TLSC LASSA program.

3. Assessment of publicly available information on the LASSA Network. Using the internet search engine Google, the research team conducted a general search of the "LASSA Network", "legal aid services sexual assault", and of each of the identified Network partners by agency name.

4. Interviews with LASSA Network member agencies. Using guidance from the literature, consultation from the TLSC LASSA team, and feedback from the Director of Research with IDVSA, the research team developed interview questions for the network partners. The research team conducted individual

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interviews with participants either a) in person or b) over the phone. Data from the interviews was analyzed using the process outlined below.

5. Secondary data collection. Reports pertaining to population served, client feedback, staff feedback, and funding were requested from each Network agency, including the funder. Data from these reports were employed as rigor checks against qualitative data to understand the number of cases received and referred by each member agency, as well as other activities related to Network such as trainings, calls, and outreach.

6. Organizational document review.

7. Hotline call analysis.

Network Evaluation Partners

Nine Texas legal service agencies were selected as part of the 2015-2017 grant cycle for LASSA funding by TAJF. Interviews were conducted with the following agencies (N=15):

- The Cabrini Center
- Catholic Charities of Dallas
- Equal Justice Center
- Legal Aid Society of Lubbock
- Lone Star Legal Aid
- Tahirih Justice Center
- Texas Advocacy Project
- Texas Legal Services Center
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (Northwest)
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (Southwest)

Collaboration with sites. Sites were given information about the evaluation's premise and goals before agreeing to participate in the study. The scope of work and potential participants were established in partnership with TLSC's LASSA program. The research team developed data collection tools to encompass a broad range of questions specific to serving survivors of sexual assault, legal aid service needs, service population, and network partnerships, including referrals and data sharing. To check for comprehension and understanding, the research team shared interview and survey questions with representatives of the various professions and sites of study.

Analysis Procedure. Transcripts from interviews were analyzed using the grounded theory approach of qualitative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The research team coded transcripts manually due to the project's scope. Three research team members coded individually and met regularly to discuss themes, codes, and rectify differences in coding.

The first phase of coding included open, line-by-line coding of the transcripts by the research team. The next stage of coding included axial coding, where major themes emerged through consolidating codes based on conceptual significance and similarity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The third phase included focused coding, concepts to broader themes (Charmaz, 2006). The focus coding phase was conducted with the entirety of the research team present to discuss areas of alignment and divergence in understanding of the emerging themes.

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2

Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, SAGE, London.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.