



Panhandle Crisis Center

April 2024

www.panhandlecrisiscenter.org

Sexual Assault Awareness Month



Resilience Rising: A Survivor's Story

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Sexual assault has lasting, life-long repercussions for the victims. This ripple effect is exacerbated when a victim is not believed or supported. In the following anonymous submission from a former client, you will hear from a victim whose trajectory could have been changed had she only been believed. The Panhandle Crisis Center is here to help, support, and ensure victims feel seen and heard. Whether your victimization is recent or occurred long ago, we are here for you. There is hope.

I was born and raised in Perryton, Texas. It was the summer of my 5th-grade year, and my sister and I decided to walk to the school to play basketball. As we walked back home, two boys asked if we wanted to see their fort in the backyard. My sister said "No" because she was tired, but, being my outgoing socialite self, I enthusiastically agreed. The two boys and I walked into the backyard and their fort. I remember nothing about the fort except the cold dirt floor. One of the boys held me down while the other raped me, and then they switched places. When I returned home, my sister asked me what had taken me so long, and I told her what had happened. She said that "Richard" (name changed for privacy) would not do that and that she could not believe I would say that about the boy she liked. I never told another person about that day because if my sister, who had known where I was and who I was with, did not believe me, nobody else would either. So, in my fifth-grade mind, the way to deal with what happened that day was to have sex with anybody and everybody. Every relationship that I had during high school through my married life seemed to always be toxic in one way or another. I was also sexually assaulted while at work by a fellow employee. When I married my second husband, I truly believed that he was my knight in shining armor. This turned out not to be the case, as I was assaulted, raped, and sex trafficked during our marriage. The beatings were so severe at times that I had to be hospitalized and even underwent multiple surgeries for the damage he had caused. He had moved me out of Texas and away from my family. One night, I called my dad because I did not know what I was supposed to do, and I felt as though I was trapped. We then planned that I would head to Perryton when my husband left for work

the following day. Hearing my dad break down and cry made me realize just how far down I had gone. When I got to Perryton with literally only the clothes on my back, my dad and I went to the Sheriff's office to get a restraining order. The Sheriff took all my information and told us to go to the Panhandle Crisis Center because they could help me. I met with the advocate at the Crisis Center and told her my story. She offered shelter, which I declined due to having family I could stay with while the restraining order progressed. I met with my advocate at least once a week and sometimes more often. During one of my appointments, she showed me a job opening in a neighboring town that fit my experience and the path I wanted for my life. I was offered the position at my interview and shown the housing I could live in. When I returned to Perryton from my interview, I went straight to the Crisis Center and told my advocate I had gotten the job. She took me to the Resale Store and gave me vouchers for clothing, dishes, and household essentials. Panhandle Crisis Center volunteers, with the help of their generous donors, furnished my new home within the week. I went from only having the clothes on my back to everything I needed: employment, a furnished home, and a peace of mind I had once thought unattainable. I cannot thank the Panhandle Crisis Center enough for their support, counseling, protection, and guidance in my deepest, darkest days.

This survivor has earned multiple advanced degrees in her chosen field. We appreciate her willingness to share her story and celebrate her many successes. We believe that this survivor's story is an inspiration and a testament to what can be overcome.

We Need Your Help!

Domestic violence affects 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men.¹ Chances are you know someone who is suffering in silence. Domestic violence often lurks in the shadows, invisible yet devastating to those affected. As a community, we have the power to shine a light on this issue and offer support to those in need.

That's why we're asking for your help. We want to extend our reach and raise awareness by speaking at your civic groups, churches, women's groups, men's groups, youth groups, and any other gatherings where people congregate. By sharing our knowledge and services, we can empower individuals to recognize the signs of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Let's spread awareness and create a community where everyone feels safe and supported.

Contact our Community Educator, Jazlyn Bailey, @ 806-435-5008 or by email @ education@pccperryton.org

¹ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), "Domestic Violence Statistics." <https://ncadv.org/statistics>

Open House!

We are excited to announce that the renovations at Panhandle Crisis Center are almost complete! We are working hard to transform our space after the devastating tornado, and we are eager to host an Open House once the renovations are done.

Stay in the loop by following us on Facebook, where we'll announce the date for our upcoming Open House. Get ready to witness the positive changes firsthand and join us as we continue to strengthen our commitment to supporting survivors.



Facebook Link: <https://bit.ly/PerrytonpccFacebook>



Breaking the Silence: Examining the Persistent Effects of Sexual Assault

By: Samantha Gonzalez, Program Director for Panhandle Crisis Center

Unlike an accidental cut, the scars left behind by a sexual assault are most times unseen. This leads survivors to be untrusting of others and frequently suffer in silence. The strength it takes to report to law enforcement or even divulge the assault to family and friends often feels insurmountable. Lack of feeling supported or believed, coupled with feelings of guilt and shame, leads survivors to do things that even they don't always understand.

Please note that not every survivor will experience all these effects and that some effects are not immediately seen and can materialize at any point in a survivor's lifetime following a triggering event. Furthermore, this is not an exhaustive list of the lingering effects survivors endure.

Substance abuse

The relationship between sexual violence and substance abuse is highly reported by survivors. According to one study, when compared with women who had never been victims of crime, female victims experiencing Rape-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 26 times more likely to abuse illicit or prescription drugs.¹ Survivors may use substances to numb feelings of guilt and shame or to mitigate the symptoms of PTSD, which may include reliving the trauma, nightmares, widespread physical pain, headaches, and insomnia. Research suggests 45% of women and 65% of men who reported having experienced rape met the criteria for PTSD.²

Sexual Dysfunction

The way survivors of sexual assault move forward with their lives and subsequent intimate relationships varies greatly from survivor to survivor. Some survivors may refrain from physical connections, and other survivors may use sexual connections to, in a sense, take back their power. Neither response leads to fulfilling or satisfying relationships, and both stem from a loss of self-worth. The survivor who refrains from sexual contact may feel "dirty" or "unworthy," while the survivor who exhibits promiscuous behavior may see their actions as regaining control of their bodies and sexuality.

Depression

The feelings of being sad and hopeless, coupled with anxiety and a lack of trust in humankind following an assault, make depression one of the most common effects of sexual assault. The feelings associated with depression will often accompany the previously examined effects: substance abuse and sexual dysfunction. Survivors also may turn inwards and withdraw from loved ones or activities they once enjoyed. This can lead to self-harm and even suicide if the survivor doesn't find a way to regulate the feelings of loneliness.

Many of these effects go hand in hand. This goes even further when you consider that approximately 50% of the people who report being assaulted before the age of 18 go on to experience another assault in their adult life and that being sexually assaulted as an adult also increases the risk of further sexual victimizations.³ The effects of sexual assault create vulnerabilities that lend to the revictimization of survivors. You may ask, how can I help? What difference can I make? Believe survivors. Support survivors. Refer survivors to Panhandle Crisis Center. Rather than judging behaviors, consider that these are effects of trauma and extend compassion. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of many.

¹Kilpatrick, D., Edmunds, C. and Seymour, A. (1992) Rape in America: A Report to the Nation. National Victim Center, Arlington. Pg 8

²Street, A. E. & Dardis, C. M. (2018). Using a social construction of gender lens to understand gender differences in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 66, 97-105.

³Walker, H., Freud, J.S., Ellis, R.A., Fraine, S.M, Wilson, L.C. (2017) *The Prevalence of Sexual Revictimization: A Meta-Analytic Review*

Sign up to Receive the Newsletter by Email

If you would like to receive Panhandle Crisis Center's newsletter by email, please send an email with your name and email address to:

volunteer@pccperryton.org

This option is simply to provide a more cost-effective means of disseminating our newsletter. PCC will not share your email address with any outside entities.

Basic Items Always Welcome, Always Needed at Panhandle Crisis Center

Temporary Location: 320 SE 24th Perryton, TX 79070

- Canned Meat
- Paper Goods
- Toilet Cleaner
- Disinfectant Wipes
- Bleach
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Deodorant
- Razors
- Hair Brushes
- Hair Accessories
- Dryer Sheets
- Fabric Softener
- Body Wash
- Bar Soap
- Non-Perishable Foods

Panhandle Crisis Center: Providing Help, Hope, and Healing

Panhandle Crisis Center offers help, hope, and healing to victims of abuse. The Center's philosophy is that no child should live in fear of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and that every home should be a place free from violence.

This small nonprofit in Perryton, Texas, was established in 1984 and serves Ochiltree, Hansford, and Lipscomb Counties. Each year, the Center serves approximately 300 adults and children who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse.

The Center operates an emergency shelter where families (including pets) flee to escape family violence. The Center also provides counseling, advocacy, financial assistance, and other supportive services to adults and children as they heal from the trauma of abuse. All services are free.

Additionally, prevention programs are provided annually to school-age children on a variety of topics including bullying, child safety, dating violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.

Perryton, TX 79070

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Panhandle Crisis Center
Helping Victims of Abuse



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