

School Safety, Policing, and Students' Rights Focus of Online Toolkit



In September, Texas Appleseed, Disability Rights Texas, and the Earl Carl Institute published an online toolkit, *Make My School Safe*, designed to provide members of school communities and policymakers with answers to fundamental questions about school safety, law enforcement in schools, students' rights, and the impacts of school safety strategies on students with disabilities. The toolkit, found at www.MakeMySchoolSafe.org, provides these resources and information:

- Explains strategies that have been shown to improve school climates and safety, and debunks myths about those that do not;
- Describes the harms of relying on law enforcement in schools to interact with students in non-emergency situations;
- Provides practical tips for students about their rights in school;
- Focuses on the unique impact that school safety strategies can have on students with disabilities; and
- Encourages members of school communities to urge campus and district administrators to adopt effective school safety strategies.

Surge in Arrests for Texas Students Following Parkland and Santa Fe Tragedies

In Texas, there was a 156% increase in referrals to juvenile probation departments for terroristic threat and a 600% increase in referrals for exhibition of firearms, comparing January through May 2018 with the same time period in 2017. Sixty-six percent of the exhibition of firearms referrals were for threatening to exhibit a weapon, not actual possession. Texas Appleseed, Disability Rights Texas, the Earl Carl Institute and Children's Defense Fund-Texas documented these findings and more in our report, *Collateral Consequences*.

Terroristic Threat and Exhibition of Firearms Referrals, January-May (2016-18)



While it is imperative for schools to respond to any threat of violence, our research showed students were being unnecessarily arrested for both of these felony offenses when schools failed to distinguish between actual threats and ordinary child behavior. Cases included a 17-year-old who was taken to jail for pulling the school's fire alarm and a 12-year-old with a disability who was pretending to shoot make-believe creatures with his finger in an empty hallway.

In 2019, during a session that is sure to include a big focus on school safety, Appleseed hopes the Texas Legislature will prioritize research-based, multi-tiered approaches to school safety that include a threat assessment team model. Threat assessment teams are an evidence-based model that ensures a proportionate response to threats of violence in schools.

Find the report and more data here:
<http://stories.texasappleseed.org/collateral-consequences>



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We Do Exist Campaign Launches During Homeless Youth Awareness Month

With an estimated 60,000 unaccompanied 13- to 17-year-olds and nearly 300,000 unaccompanied 18- to 25-year-olds who experience homelessness in Texas over the course of a year, Texas Appleseed and LifeWorks Austin launched We Do Exist in November, a campaign to help raise awareness about the needs and realities of youth experiencing homelessness. The tagline of the campaign is *Help Bring Them Out of the Shadows*, acknowledging how homeless youth tend to hide and fly under the radar because of stigma they perceive, fear of being placed in foster care, or fear of being returned to abusive home environments.

We Do Exist addresses many of the complexities surrounding the issue of youth homelessness, including aging out of foster care, gaps in provided services, and ways to increase school-based resources so that youth don't fall behind in their education. The campaign offers a number of local and statewide resources, aimed at both young people and advocates. Campaign components include billboard and city bus advertising, an educational banner at Austin City Hall, and local business participation. Participating restaurants used our specially branded glass candleholders at their dining tables, while participating coffee shops served hot drinks in We Do Exist branded coffee sleeves. The campaign was made possible with pro bono design and creative support from AIGA Austin.

Learn more about the campaign at www.WeDoExist.org. Find the campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @wedoexistTX.



Moving Texas Towards a Just Recovery

Disaster recovery involves a lot of déjà vu, but we are seeing the results of our last decade of work in Texas' response to Harvey: from prioritizing rebuilding affordable rental housing and serving families with lower incomes in proportion to their damage, to requiring fair housing evaluations for both housing and infrastructure programs, to ensuring no survivors are left behind. Texas Appleseed will keep working for a just recovery.

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

Think of us when purchasing gifts online this season!
Amazon gives back to Texas Appleseed when you shop at
smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2804268.

LSAT

In 2018, we awarded **17 scholarships** to young people who plan to pursue the legal profession. As part of our Diversity Legal Scholars program, we cover the full cost of the LSAT prep course for low-income people of color.

Good Apple Dinner



Honoring
ROBIN GIBBS

It was a wonderful night to honor trial lawyer **Robin Gibbs** as our Good Apple! We celebrated Robin's commitment to pro bono, his dedication to helping others via charitable causes, and his impressive legal career. We also commended the work of two outstanding law firms with Pro Bono Leadership Awards, **Bell Nunnally** and **Latham & Watkins LLP**.



New Study Finds Women, Widows Penalized When Obtaining Auto Insurance

Female motorists in Texas often pay significantly more for auto insurance than male motorists, despite having identical driving records, identical vehicles and other matching characteristics that insurers use to price auto insurance, such as home address and age, according to our latest study, *Out of Alignment: Women & Discrimination in the Texas Auto Insurance Market*. The study also revealed that pricing penalties were used in the case of marital status, with unmarried women paying the highest average rates.

The report assessed online premium quotes from five large auto insurers operating in eight Texas cities: Allstate, Farmers, Geico, Progressive and State Farm. Only State Farm offered the same prices for women as men, and did not change rates based on marital status.

The Texas Department of Insurance should assess possible failings in its rate evaluation systems that allow disparate pricing that results in gender-driven differences and appear to violate state law, and should block discriminatory rating practices. The Texas Legislature should demand that the Texas Department of Insurance fulfill its legal responsibility to prohibit pricing discrimination against women, people who are divorced, and widows in Texas and to legislate protection for women against unfair auto insurance pricing, if TDI is unwilling to enforce existing laws.

Find the report, as well as additional data and recommendations here:

<http://stories.texasappleseed.org/out-of-alignment>

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