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Rape victims aid requested

The McLennan County District Attorney's office has applied for a state grant to establish a program to aid rape victims and witnesses.

If the grant is approved by the Criminal Justice Division of the governor's office, the program will begin in September or October, said John Ben Sutter, administrative assistant to District Attorney Vic Feazell.

The Victim's Rights Task Force of the Waco Interagency Committee on Sexual Assault, in response to some victims' complaints of a lack of sensitivity they felt during the legal process, recently compiled a list of 10 rights victims of sexual assaults should be guaranteed.

Jean Turner, executive director of the Waco Rape Crisis Center, said the proposed program should help alleviate many current problems.

The program requested by the district attorney's office would be responsible for, among other things, educating victims and witnesses on the criminal justice system, keeping victims informed about the progression of cases through the courts, coordinating court appearances and providing counseling in cooperation with various programs and agencies that already exist in the community.

The district attorneys try to maintain contact with each case as much as possible in working with the agencies, Sutter said, but since each of the dozen attorneys has a caseload of "well over several hundred cases ... it's next to impossible to maintain contact with each individual, just because of the sheer weight of numbers."