

TEXAS CRIME STOPPERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

In June 1981, House Bill 1681, 67th Legislature, Regular Session, created the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council, which operates within the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office. Five members appointed for two-year terms by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate comprise the council. At least three council members must have participated in local crime stoppers programs.

The Advisory Council is charged with the following responsibilities:

- a. Advise and assist in the creation of local Crime Stoppers programs.
- b. Foster the detection of crime and encourage persons through the program or otherwise, to come forward with information about criminal activity.
- c. Encourage the news media to promote local Crime Stoppers programs and to inform the public of the functions of the Council.
- d. Assist local Crime Stoppers programs in channeling information reported to those programs concerning criminal activity to appropriate law enforcement agencies.
- e. Certification of local Crime Stoppers programs.

The Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council recognizes the vital role of local crime stoppers programs and their major impact, both individually and collectively, in solving felony crimes in Texas. Local crime stoppers programs are highly effective and successful because they rely on local initiative and local citizen participation. These programs continued existence and expansion throughout Texas cities and counties can effectively reduce crime.

The activities of the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council are limited to areas best served and coordinated by an organization with statewide impact. The "State Crime" features, when publicized by the Council, are limited to those classes of offenses, type of criminal activity, and fugitive felons which are most effectively impacted and solved through citizen participation on a statewide level.

The council's reward program is established to obtain information regarding criminal activity and fugitive felons throughout the state. It is designed to target priority crimes and assist local crime stoppers programs and law enforcement agencies. Care is taken to preclude an informant from obtaining more than one reward from different programs for the same information, and to discourage "shopping" among programs in an effort to obtain a higher reward.

A toll-free inward hotline (1-800-252-TIPS) is answered 24 hours. The hotline is manned by council staff to receive information. Many local crime stoppers programs incorporate the Texas 1-800 number on their telephone recorder after hours and on weekends and encourage informants to call this toll-free number to report felony crime information. This information is passed back to the local crime stoppers unit immediately or the next working day depending upon the tip's urgency. The information received is channeled, by phone as well as follow-up letter, to local crime stoppers programs or the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation. If information passed on results in an arrest and indictment, the Texas Crime Stoppers Advisory Council may pay the reward. The informant and information's confidentiality is strictly protected at all times.

Though the council will also be receiving criminal information, the main emphasis will be on the local crime stoppers programs. The duties, responsibilities, and programs of the advisory council are specifically designed to complement and assist the local crime stoppers programs' efforts within the state and will not duplicate those sponsored by local crime stoppers programs. The priority goal of the advisory council is to encourage the continued expansion and creation of additional local crime stoppers programs statewide and to assist these programs in the successful solution of felony crimes.

With the passage of Senate Bills 85 and 149, 71st Legislature, Regular Session, the advisory council is now charged with certifying all Texas Crime Stoppers programs that wish to receive and expend court generated fees under the bills' provisions. Certification is not restricted or limited to the recently adopted legislation, but applies to each crime stoppers program as minimum requirements to have a legally sound non-profit organization.