Judicial System

For many, this may be the first involvement with law enforcement or the judicial system. It’s very common for people to expect what they have seen on television or movies to apply to their current circumstances. Unfortunately, these expectations are often unrealistic or a distorted snapshot of how things truly operate.

Texas has laws and regulations in place aimed at protecting victims. For cases involving prosecution, court advocates can provide you with information, education, and support that will help reduce fears and uncertainties.

Criminal case resolution by plea agreement is a practice that is often utilized. Through both negotiation and agreement, this approach to resolution can prevent the need for testifying in court.

Benefits of Counseling

If it is safe to do so, consider seeking help from a counselor. Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing and processing the event can help you clarify what actually occurred.
- Legal and judicial decisions can be discussed and utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- Development of coping skills/strategies can support the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from traumatic experiences.

You can utilize the traumatic experiences as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and even protective instinct skills.

Who can help?

The Victim Services Unit within the Travis County Sheriff's Office can provide assistance with information about your case status, Crime Victims’ Rights, Crime Victim Compensation, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to appropriate helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.

Resources

SAFE Alliance
Travis County Family Violence and Sexual Assault Shelter and Crisis Center
(512) 267-7233 (SAFE) 24 hours
www.safeaustin.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1 (800) 799-7233 (SAFE)
www.thehotline.org

Office for Victims of Crime
1 (800) 851-3420 www.ovc.gov

Victim Information Notification Everyday
1 (877) 894-8463 www.vinelink.com

2-1-1 Texas - Resource Directory
Medical providers / other resources
2-1-1 or 1 (877) 541-7905
www.211texas.org

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Signs and symptoms of strangulation / suffocation may include (not a comprehensive list):

- Dizziness and/or disorientation
- Changes in breathing
- Difficulty breathing and/or swallowing
- Hoarse and/or raspy voice
- Loss of memory
- Headache, nausea, vomiting
- Changes in mental status (ex: restlessness, combativeness, mood swings, psychosis)
- Changes in vision and/or hearing
- Pain, Soreness, Stiffness (especially in the head, neck and throat areas)
- Physical injuries such as redness, scratches, bruising, ruptured capillaries (petechiae)


Common Reactions

Recognize that healing from a traumatic event takes time. Give yourself the time you need. Many different reactions are understandable and do not mean that you are “going crazy.” You may also find yourself reliving the incident, trying to find an alternative response or different outcome. You may see these possibilities in retrospect (now that the immediate danger has passed), but do not forget the reality of what happened. During the strangulation/suffocation you were powerless and in a state of fear. Always remember you are not to blame and that your actions were understandable given the potentially life-threatening circumstances of the strangulation/suffocation. Common reactions of victims of strangulation/suffocation are similar to those who survive other traumatic events and may include:

- Shock
- Panic
- Anger
- Helplessness
- Intrusive thinking (mind wandering, flashbacks to the event, or sense of reliving the event)
- Nightmares
- Exaggerated startle response
- Embarrassment
- Sense of vulnerability
- Sense of violation
- Desire to seek revenge

These responses will likely diminish with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to consult with a helping professional for assistance.

Documentation

Some injuries of strangulation/suffocation may not be immediately noticeable. Taking photographs of the injuries is also encouraged. Interruption of your attendance at work or your inability to work resulting from injuries should be reported to your employer. If you currently do not have a physician or medical insurance, it is possible that Victim Services personnel can assist you in locating available resources in the community. You may consider obtaining all treatment records resulting from this incident ambulance, hospital, physician, pharmacy. It is also good practice to save all receipts and bills related to or resulting from the incident. Receipts and documentation may also become important when applying for assistance through Crime Victims’ Compensation a program that may assist with out-of-pocket medical expenses that result from a crime.