DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

If you have just lost a loved one and the death is being investigated by the Travis County Sheriff's Office, rest assured that the department will fully investigate the loss of your loved one to determine what happened. Victim Services will likely be contacted by patrol staff to ensure that you have the support and resources you need during such a difficult time.

- If the death was expected, a Detective will most likely not respond to the scene to investigate. A Detective will review the case and will contact you if he/she has any questions in regards to the loss of your loved one. If you have any questions or concerns, and there is no detective assigned, you may contact Victim Services for assistance.

- If the death was unexpected, a Detective will most likely respond to the scene to investigate, even if the death appears to be from suicide. The scene will be treated as a crime scene to protect the integrity of any evidence that might have been left behind, even if it appears the person took his or her own life. During the investigation, the Detective will likely speak with the person who discovered the deceased, as well as any close family members or friends to learn more about the person who has passed away. Once the initial investigation is complete, the Detective will continue investigating the death and will be in touch with you to keep you updated on any progress.

- If the case is regarding the death of a child, it is important to know that Child Protective Services will investigate regardless of the apparent cause of death.

The Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office is responsible for the investigation and certification of cause and manner of death of all sudden, unexpected, violent, suspicious, or unnatural deaths that occur in Travis County. If the Medical Examiner will be involved in the death of your loved one, Victim Services is available to provide you with the necessary information about their office. You may also call the Medical Examiner’s Office at (512) 854-9599.

In the event of an unexpected death, if family and friends are not financially prepared for funeral arrangements, Victim Services is available to help with resource information for qualifying cases.

Grief and Loss

Grief is a normal response to loss, yet it sometimes produces emotional and physical reactions which can be alarming. Not all of these behaviors are healthy and some may need to be changed, but they are understandable and do not mean the person experiencing them is “crazy” or that their feelings are “wrong.” No two people grieve the same. If you are grieving you may experience:
Emotional Reactions
Anger
Fear
Extreme sadness
Loneliness
Detachment/Lack of emotional response

Physical Reactions
Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
Unintentional changes in eating habits
Significant and unintentional weight loss or weight gain
Increased susceptibility to illness

Behavioral Reactions
Lack of motivation for daily activities
Lack of concentration or memory
Increased irritability
Unpredictable, uncontrollable bouts of crying or screaming
Panic/anxiety attacks
Wanting to talk about the deceased
Worrying about talking about the deceased too much
Increased use of alcohol, prescription drugs, or street drugs to help you cope
Fast of reckless driving/behavior

Suggestions For Coping With Grief
Keep decision making to a minimum
Accept help and support when offered
Seek support and assistance from others
Talk and tell others how you are feeling
Try to get adequate rest
Try to maintain good nutrition
Keep a journal to understand what you are feeling
Remember that it is okay to feel depressed
Remember that it is okay to cry
Be patient with yourself, healing takes time

If you need assistance with grief counseling or support, there are several resources in the Austin area available to help you. Some are listed below.

If you have other resource needs, questions or are unable to reach the Detective handling your case, please contact Victim Services at 854-9709.

Available Resources
For the Love of Christi: (512) 467-2600
www.fortheloveofchristi.org
Grief Support Agency
My Healing Place: (512) 472-7878
www.myhealingplace.org
Grief Support Agency

Hospice Austin: (512) 342-4700
www.hospiceaustin.org
Provides free brief counseling and support groups to anyone who has lost a loved one due to death

Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office: (512) 854-9599
www.co.travis.tx.us/medical_examiner/default.asp

Office of the Attorney General – Crime Victims Compensation: 1 (800) 983-9933
www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/about_comp.shtml