

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. 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.

Education and information regarding how the judicial system operates can assist victims and their family in the reduction of trauma.

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing and processing the incident 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.
- Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies—allowing for the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, emotional, and psychological effects that often result from traumatic experiences.

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

Who can help?

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



Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233)
www.thehotline.org

First Call For Help (Capital Area United Way)

Dial 211
www.211texas.org
Provides callers with information and referral to resources

Internet Safety

www.oag.state.tx.us/criminal/cybersafety.shtml
www.wiredsafety.org

Phone/Text Safety

www.oag.state.tx.us/criminal/wirelesscontrols.shtml
www.oag.state.tx.us/teens/index.shtml

Information and Advocacy

www.womenslaw.org

Harassment

Victim Services Unit

5555 Airport Blvd
Austin, TX 78751
512-854-9709



Name/ID Number:

Direct Number:

Mailing Address:

PO Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

What is Harassment?

There are several types of harassment—including sexual, workplace, and teen peer harassment, among others. Harassment can be perpetrated by an acquaintance, an unknown person, a family member, or a former intimate partner. When a person is harassed by a family member or intimate partner it is considered a family violence crime.

Harassment can be a risk factor for further violence and should be taken very seriously. It can lead to more severe crimes like terroristic threats or stalking.

According to the Texas Penal Code, someone commits Harassment if this person initiates communication by telephone, text, in writing, or by electronic communication with the intent to harass, annoy, alarm, abuse, torment, or embarrass another.

If You Are Being Harassed

- **File a report** – especially if the contact is obscene or threatening
- Instruct the offender to stop contacting you, and document when you do
- Document each occurrence (including method/date/time) of the harassment
- Don't play detective
- Don't engage the perpetrator
- Don't extend contact by trying to figure out who it is: that is what they want
- Hang up if they do not respond or at the first inappropriate comment
- Don't indicate to a caller that you are upset – just hang up
- Don't be clever – the perpetrator may see this as encouragement

Harassment Prevention

It is important to understand that you are not responsible for the behavior of someone who is harassing you. There are, however, action steps you can take to reduce your chances of being harassed.

- Never volunteer your phone number or any of your personal information.
- If necessary and possible, change your cell phone number or block calls and messages from the harassing number.
- Try to limit your personal information that is available in public, including on the internet.
- Do not list your cell phone number on your social network page (Facebook, MySpace).
- Adjust your privacy settings on your social network page and consider who you allow access to.
- Always be careful divulging any information to someone else over the phone or internet or by text message.
- Do not reply to messages from people you do not know.
- **KNOW** who you are interacting with and if you are in doubt, verify their identity and their credentials first.
- If you are called by a “business” person, look up the business, contact them, and ensure that the person is a valid staff member.
- If someone asks what number they called, ask what number they dialed instead.
- Instruct your children and family members to never reveal information to unknown callers or people on the internet.

Harassment and Children

Children are often susceptible to harassment from their peers. Parents/guardians play a vital role in helping children to identify and report harassment, but also in appropriately responding to harassment.

- Check in with your child frequently—“Tell me about your day.”
- Stay involved with your children's friends, activities, and teachers.
- Role play possible scenarios with children so they are prepared to respond appropriately.
- Be an appropriate role model—demonstrate positive, clear communication regarding expected behavior.
- Believe your child when they talk about harassment from peers.
- Document and report harassing behavior to school officials and law enforcement.

Common Responses

If you are or have been harassed you may be affected in different ways. It is common to experience reactions such as anger, fear, frustration, sadness, and guilt. Children often experience feelings of isolation.

Everyone reacts to stressful situations differently so know that whatever you are feeling or experiencing is normal. If your reactions last longer than a few weeks or are having an impact on your daily life, you might want to seek professional assistance.