



## **SERIOUS TRAFFIC INCIDENTS AND FATALITIES**

When a serious injury or death occurs unexpectedly, it can be a very confusing and traumatic event for those involved. This information is intended to help you better understand what happens after a serious injury accident or fatality, and who to contact for more information.

### **What happens at the scene of a serious accident?**

After an accident with serious injuries occurs, the first people on scene are usually first responders: EMS paramedics, firefighters, and law enforcement personnel. Their job is to assess the situation. Depending on the severity of their injuries, patients might be transported to the hospital via ambulance. In very serious cases, survivors could also be transported by the Travis County Starflight Helicopter to the nearest appropriate level trauma center. Most adult patients are transported to the Austin/Travis County level two trauma center at Dell Seton Medical Center. Children are transported to Dell Children's Medical Center.

#### **Dell Seton Medical Center**

1500 Red River Street, Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 324-7600

#### **Dell Children's Medical Center**

4900 Mueller Blvd., Austin, Texas 78723  
(512) 324-0000

TCSO Victim Services may be called to the scene of the incident or to the hospital to provide crisis services to the family and survivors. Victim Services may also be asked to accompany TCSO Deputies or DPS Troopers to notify next-of-kin if there has been a death. Victim Services can offer support, assistance contacting loved ones, information about the process, information about funeral services and grief resources.

### **What happens during the investigation?**

If the incident is very serious or results in death, the Travis County Sheriff's Office will contact the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to conduct an investigation. Travis County will remain on scene to provide assistance, such as traffic control, but DPS will likely be the primary investigative agency.

***Any questions related to the investigation of a traffic fatality should be directed to the Texas Department of Public Safety at (512) 424-2000.***

## **What if the accident results in a death?**

The Travis County Medical Examiner's Office will be contacted for transport of the body upon completion of the on-scene investigation. When there is a need to establish cause of death or in cases where criminal proceedings may follow, the Medical Examiner's Office will perform an examination.

**Travis County Medical Examiner**  
7723 Springdale Road, Austin TX 78724  
(512) 854-9599

## **How is a funeral is arranged if the Medical Examiner is involved?**

If you do not already have a funeral home selected, a Victim Services advocate may provide you with a list of local funeral homes, or you may find a list in the resources section of this website. Once you have selected a funeral home, notify them that the death investigation is being handled by the Medical Examiner's Office. The Medical Examiner's Office will normally conclude their examination within a 12-24 hour time period. Then they will contact the legal next-of-kin to determine which funeral home has been selected by the family. They will then contact the selected funeral home directly to make arrangements for transport of the body.

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**

The loss of a loved one or a major traumatic incident that results in a serious injury can both cause feelings of grief. 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 or reckless driving/behavior

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

### 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.*

### **Who can I call for more help?**

If you still have questions following an incident, please feel free to contact TCSO Victim Services at (512) 854-9709, Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

### **Helpful Numbers**

#### **Dell Seton Medical Center**

1500 Red River Street, Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 324-7600

#### **Dell Children's Hospital**

4900 Mueller Blvd. Austin, Texas 78723  
(512) 324-0000

#### **Texas Department of Public Safety**

5805 North Lamar Blvd. Austin, Texas 78752  
(512) 424-2000

[www.txdps.state.tx.us](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us)

## Available Resources

### **Medical Examiner's Office**

(512) 854-9599

<https://www.traviscountytx.gov/medical-examiner>

### **Office of the Attorney General Crime Victims Compensation**

1 (800) 983-9933

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cvs/crime-victims-compensation>

### **The Christi Center**

(512) 467-2600

[www.christicenter.org](http://www.christicenter.org)

### **Austin Center for Grief and Loss**

(512) 472-7878

[www.austingrief.org](http://www.austingrief.org)

### **Hospice Austin**

(512) 342-4700

[www.hospiceaustin.org](http://www.hospiceaustin.org)