

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

2-1-1 Texas

2-1-1 or 1-877-541-7905

www.211texas.org

VINE

(Victim Information and Notification Everyday)

1-877-894-8463

www.vinelink.com

Office for Victims of Crime

1-800-851-3420

www.ovc.gov

After A Burglary

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

Common Reactions

Shock and Disbelief...You may feel shock and disbelief that something like this has actually happened to you, that your home has been broken into and your belongings stolen.

Sense of Violation...A sense of violation is a common feeling after a burglary. This sense of violation and loss can be both financial and emotional. Your privacy and sense of personal security have been affected, in addition to your possessions being taken or damaged.

Anger and Frustration...Anger at the intruders is a very common feeling. Because you are not able to express this anger directly at those who committed the crime, you may feel frustrated with law enforcement and the court system—especially if the people responsible and your property have not been found.

Fear...After a burglary, you may fear that your home is not a safe place anymore. You may feel uncomfortable being alone at home, or worry when you are not there. Many people fear that their home will be broken into again or that they are being singled out—most of the time the thieves want your possessions and did not break into your home because of who or what you are.

Suspicion...Many victims of burglary find themselves full of suspicion about strangers in their neighborhoods. You are encouraged to report any suspicious persons or activities to Travis County Sheriff's Office.

Stress...After a burglary you may experience an increase in your stress level. You may even develop physical reactions, such as sleeping or eating difficulties due to the increased stress.

Guilt...Victims often feel guilt, as if there might have been something they could have done to help prevent the burglary. Of course, you are in no way to blame — when someone else breaks the law it is not your fault.

Children's Reactions

Remember that children may experience the same feelings as adults, and may have a hard time expressing their feelings in words. Their fear, anxiety, or anger may be expressed in changes in behavior. They may go back to earlier childhood behaviors, such as bed-wetting. Some children might become more aggressive and some might become quiet and withdrawn. All of these responses are normal reactions to stress.

Children will often need special reassurance at this time. They may be frightened and need to know that their home can once again be a safe place. Encourage your children to talk about their feelings.

What Can You Do?

You have been through a frightening and disruptive experience. Remember that what you are feeling is perfectly normal and will likely pass in time. Meanwhile, there are some things you can do to make this time easier and to make things better for yourself in the future.

- If you are frightened, get someone to stay at your home with you, or stay with a friend or family member for a night or two.
- Talking about the experience is a very good way to put your feelings in order. Family and friends can be a great support.
- Take enough time to complete any paperwork thoroughly. This may become important if you file a claim with your insurance.
- Monitor your bank and credit accounts in the event that personal information was taken.
- Consider becoming involved in a Neighborhood Watch Crime Prevention program — an excellent way to help safeguard your home.

Adding extra outdoor lighting or motion detectors, getting deadbolt locks on doors, seeing that sliding doors and windows cannot be forced or lifted out of their frames and making your home look occupied are ways to make your home more secure.

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.

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 the incident 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.
- 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, 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.