

## 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 victims clarify what actually occurred.
- The discussion of legal and judicial decisions can be utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies—allowing for the continuance of school, play and relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative psychological, physical, and emotional effects that often result from the traumatic experience.

Children and loved ones can utilize traumatic experiences as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and 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 community helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.



## Resources

### Center for Child Protection

512-472-1164

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

### 2-1-1 Texas

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

[www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org)

### Office for Victims of Crime

1-800-851-3420

[www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov)

## Children and Sexual Abuse

### 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

Reactions to traumatic events, such as sexual abuse, may appear immediately following an event, or days or weeks later. Children who have experienced a traumatic event commonly express feelings through behavioral changes. This may occur because children don't possess the social, developmental, or psychological maturity to fully understand what has happened to them.

## Common Responses

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**Fear**—fear of being separated, fear of closed-in areas, fear of new situations, excessive clinging.

**Sleep disturbance**—nightmares, refusal to sleep alone, interrupted sleep, excessive sleep

**Physical complaints**—stomach aches, head aches, dizziness and other bodily symptoms with no physical cause

**Change in eating habits**—loss of appetite, reluctance to eat, eating binges, food hoarding

**Regressive behavior**—loss of toilet training, thumb sucking, bed wetting, fear of darkness

**School performance**—difficulty concentrating, refusal to attend classes or activities, decline in performance, disruptive behavior, difficulty with peer relationships

**Change in demeanor**—withdrawal, emotional numbing, confusion, anger outbursts, loss of trust in others, expressions of guilt, crying, whimpering.

Just as every child is unique, so is every child's reaction to a traumatic event. Your child may display one, a few, or all of these reactions. It's important to remember that most children only experience reactions for brief time periods

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## Respect

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Remember that most children desire to please and succeed. Monitoring your discussions about the incident, the child, and your feelings and fears is important. Doing so provides respect for your child's privacy and feelings and may minimize their sense of shame, guilt or responsibility about what occurred.

Another way to respect your child is by allowing them to decide whether or not they want to talk. For some, art or playing may be the most comfortable way of expression.

Sometimes family secrets surface and grudges develop in response to traumatic events. Respect and privacy of the child need to be a priority. Therefore you may need to be selective about sharing the information. Take into consideration how the person you are sharing the information with will react and try to prepare for unexpected responses.

## Rules and Routine

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It is common for parents to relax rules and disrupt routines when a child has experienced a difficult event. The reality is that rules and routines help them maintain their sense of safety, security, and assist with their recovery.

Parents often forget or don't see a child as resilient. When provided with support and safety, recovery for a child is usually done with little difficulty. On the other hand, parents are usually more upset and distressed during the recovery process.

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## Time and Patience

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Patience may run short for both you and your child. After a traumatic event, you and your child will require time to adjust. We all have a need for a sense of security and reassuring your child they are safe and that those they love are safe is one of the most healthy responses you can provide.

Emotions for you and your child will most likely be at different states and levels. As time passes the strength of the feelings and other effects of the experience will lessen.

Providing a balance of honest information about the incident and education about the prevention of future incidents is a wonderful way to help your child gain awareness, a sense of control, and reduce the impact of the traumatic event.

Remember, involvement in a traumatic event can produce upsetting responses such as disturbed sleep, changes in appetite, and also difficulty concentrating. These responses will likely subside with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to turn to a helping professional for assistance.

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