



## 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 or 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](http://www.fortheloveofchristi.org)  
Grief Support Agency

My Healing Place: (512) 472-7878

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

Grief Support Agency

Hospice Austin: (512) 342-4700

[www.hospiceaustin.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/about_comp.shtml)