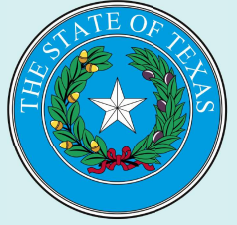


Summer 2020



The Docket



Sharen Wilson - Criminal District Attorney

We have lived through unprecedented times this summer, and not only with COVID. The deaths of George Floyd and others have become the source of serious conversations about racial equality in the justice system. Every employee in this office knows that the first duty of prosecutors is to seek justice for all, regardless of race, gender, economic status or any other bias.

We are in the accountability business. We must always be willing to examine how we improve prosecutions and ensure that race or any other bias has no part in our decisions or our practices.

I am committed to upholding that responsibility every day as your Criminal District Attorney.

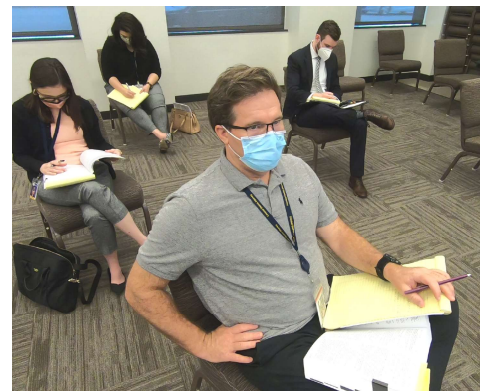


ACDA Keeli Lane conducting a docket hearing via Zoom

PROSECUTING DURING COVID

Six months after COVID hit Tarrant County, no one knows what life will be like next month or even next year. But work at The Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's office hasn't slowed. While the Texas Supreme Court banned jury trials until at least October, our prosecutors continued preparing cases and presenting them to the Grand Jury. The case load is piling up – and it's up to the courts to address that. We stand ready to work with judges to address the backlog. In mid-March, 10,589 felony and 15,575 misdemeanor cases were pending.

By mid-September, those numbers rose to 15,161 felony and 16,942 misdemeanor cases."With Covid halting trials for almost the entirety of 2020, the stress and anxiety for victims and survivors is mounting," said prosecutor Allenna Bangs, chief of the Intimate Partner Violence team. "We have spent a great deal of time communicating with families, listening to frustrations, addressing concerns where possible, while using this time wisely to prepare for the eventual return to the courtroom."





FAMILY VIOLENCE

Prosecutors, law enforcers and victim services workers are worried about a spike in family violence cases due to COVID. And they worry about the cases that aren't reported as well, because so many people can no longer get to a safe place to report abuse.

What is known is that 14 people in Tarrant County as of August were killed by their abusers. That's up from eight intimate partner homicides in all of 2019.



Overall, IPV cases rose from 2,026 between March and September in 2019 to 2,075 between March and September 2020. This year, some adult sexual assaults have been more violent during COVID than in the past, with some victims suffering broken bones - arms or noses - in addition to a sexual assault.

And prosecutors worry that victims will be attacked again by their offenders because many have bonded out of jail amid concerns of COVID spreading in close quarters. They continue to check in on victims to make sure resources are available to those who need them.

"We have worked very hard during this time because we recognize that 'stay home, stay safe' is not safe for everyone," said ACDA Demetrice Lopez.



HOT CHECKS

It's a digital world and not many people write checks any more.

But one Fort Worth couple who run a small computer consulting company received a \$5,300 check in payment for equipment and services.

And it bounced.

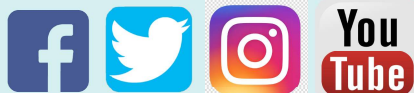
The couple asked the customer for a new check, which they received. It bounced as well.

They weren't sure what to do and ended up turning to the Tarrant County CDA's Hot Check Department, which in about two months was able to get the couple their payment in full.

"I have watched you and your office function on behalf of victims of violent crimes for many years, and have had the opportunity to work alongside your talented team in many situations," the couple wrote in a letter to the TCCDA's office. "While this type of economic crime does not even begin to cause the horrendous impact of those crimes, it does leave one feeling betrayed, voiceless, and helpless."

"Please express to your Hot Check team how grateful we are for their assistance in helping us find justice in our circumstance."

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