

The mission of the office of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney is to enhance public safety through vigorous enforcement of criminal and civil laws in an ethical, honest, and just manner; to encourage rehabilitation for deserving offenders; to earn the public's trust by setting an example of transparency in our dealings; and to assist and educate victims of crimes and other members of the public.







Office of Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson

2017 Annual Report



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A MESSAGE FROM SHAREN WILSON

Tarrant County is now the 15th largest county in the nation, with a population of just over 2 million residents. As the top law enforcement official in the county, I continue to work each day both internally and with our external partners to find new, innovative ways to most effectively and efficiently use our resources to provide fair and equal justice for the people of Tarrant.

Almost 45,000 criminal cases were filed with my office in 2017, and each and every one is handled by our dedicated, talented men and women attorneys, investigators and staff. In May of this year, I created a new special prosecution team, our Elder Financial Fraud unit, designed to serve as a community resource addressing the special needs of elderly victims through a mission of aggressive prosecution, education and deterrence (see pg. 11). Our Intimate Partner Violence unit, created

in 2016, continued to have great success, expanding our ongoing partnership with law enforcement agencies and non-profits, and launching the first public awareness campaign to bring attention to the epidemic of these crimes in Tarrant County (see pg. 9).

It was another year of growth, with more cases, additional attorneys approved by the County Commissioners, and exponentially more digital media evidence continuing to be submitted by law enforcement (see pg. 12). As the name suggests, this encompasses all evidence gathered through digital tools, including police dash and body cam footage, surveillance video, and information collected from the cell phones, tablets and computers of defendants and witnesses. As the use of these devices continues to grow, the time we must dedicate to reviewing this type of evidence multiplies.

Although much of the attention our office receives is focused on our Criminal Division, we also have 3 additional divisions that make it possible for us to accomplish the work of the county each day, month and year. This Annual Report also includes information on each of those integral divisions and their areas of responsibility.

I am proud to work each day with the employees of this office, and we remain committed to advancing our mission to ensure justice for all here in Tarrant County. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if I may ever be of assistance to you.

Sincerely, Sincerely,

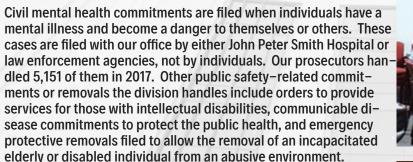
THE CIVIL DIVISION

A Criminal District Attorney's Office, like we have here in Tarrant County, differs from District or County Attorney offices because it has responsibility for both criminal and civil matters. Our Civil Division acts primarily as the "General Counsel" for Tarrant County and its elected or appointed officials. Civil prosecutors represent the County's interests in all areas of civil litigation or business, including contracts, employment law, property damage, civil rights, and bail bond forfeitures.

As counsel to county officials, the civil attorneys advise them on the legal aspects of their government obligations. Sometimes these can include matters of unexpected historic significance, such as when 1,100+ year old Native American remains were discovered by a construction crew working in downtown Fort Worth. Our civil attorneys first made disclosures to the appropriate historic agencies that the remains had been found. They then worked with the agencies to determine whether the remains should be reinterred in the original location, and the site made unavailable for construction, or buried in another location. Through their work, the remains were laid to rest in Oakwood Cemetery in December 2017 in a Native American ceremony.



The Civil Division also serves in a social capacity by assisting with protective orders and mental health commitments. A protective order is a civil court order to prevent continuing acts of family violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, or sexual assault. It can be valid for up to 2 years, and unlike a restraining order, can be enforced by law enforcement. These orders place specific restrictions on the individual, such as requiring him or her to stay a specified distance from the victim, not to communicate with the victim verbally or digitally, or not to remove children or pets from the victim's care. Those seeking information about protective orders can do so online at cda.tarrantcounty.com, or can call or email our attorneys at 817.884.1623 or pounit@tarrantcountytx.gov.



Finally, our civil attorneys represent the Department of Family and Protective Services in cases where abuse and neglect are alleged and court intervention is sought.

Our Civil Division Chief is Robert Browder.







THE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

Our Investigative Division is staffed almost 50 investigators who are all certified Texas Peace Officers with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Many received years of training with other law enforcement agencies in specialties such as fraud investigation, digital forensics, homicide, gang task forces and critical interview techniques. Investigators are assigned to court teams or specialized units within our office based on those areas of expertise.

Their primary responsibilities include assisting the prosecutors in evaluating and preparing cases for trial. They review the evidence, determine areas requiring further investigation, locate witnesses, and facilitate the collection of the information necessary to allow our prosecutors to make informed decisions on the final dispositions of cases.



Our investigators are regularly called on to advise and assist Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies in a wide variety of situations. This year our White Collar unit investigators conducted multiple White Collar Crime workshops for police departments around the County, to share tools and contacts needed to produce highly prosecutable white collar cases. The investigators in our Elder Financial Fraud unit were instrumental in the development of the Financial Exploitation Prevention Center of Tarrant County (see pg. 11), and presented at 2 elder fraud training conferences for Tarrant County law enforcement agencies this year. Several of our investigators volunteer part of their work days to make the presentations and provide guidance to the nonviolent first-offenders involved in our Deferred Prosecution Program (pg. 6), designed to give those unlikely to reoffend a chance to redeem themselves and clear their criminal record. And one of our investigators is a nationally-recognized expert on the complicated crime of Munchausen by Proxy, or medical child abuse, and recently co-authored the Best Practice Guidelines on the crime for the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.

Following the retirement of Division Chief Gary Willis at the end of 2017, our new chief, Tammie Hughes was sworn in on January 2, 2018.

THE CHIEF OF STAFF DIVISION

This division, the second largest in the office, is responsible for all non-laywer, non-investigator operations of the office. This includes office personnel matters, business operations, information technology, research and statistical, and facilities projects, as well as the Victim Advocates, Community Outreach and Communications units.

Fiscal responsibility is a priority of CDA Wilson's, and in 2017, the business operations staff in this division managed to bring our office in under budget for our third consecutive year (see pg. 8). This staff also manages the grants



received by our office, including the Texas Department of Transportation's No Refusal Grant, which allows us to work with local law enforcement agencies and medical personnel to designate "No Refusal" periods countywide to aggressively combat drunk driving.

Our support staff, including the legal assistants, paralegals and other administrative employees make it possible for our prosecutors to successfully manage their heavy caseloads. Whether it's doing research, organizing the volumnious files, fielding the hundreds of phone calls we receive daily, or keeping our court teams informed and on schedule, our support staff are tireless in their dedication to achieving the office goals and providing a valuable service to the public. This year, we continued our program of continuing education opportunities tailored specifically for this part of the team, mirroring the continuing legal education programs attended by our attorneys and ongoing law enforcement education opportunities utilized by our investigators.

This division is led by Chief of Staff Shannon Fletcher.

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^{*}Top photo courtesy of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram

2017 AT A GLANCE

Total Cases Filed

TOTAL 44,522
FELONY 18,185
MISDEMEANOR 26,337



121.67: TERABYTES OF DIGITAL MEDIA EVIDENCE (DME) SUBMITTED TO OUR OFFICE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT IN 2017

Top Felony Cases (by # of cases filed)

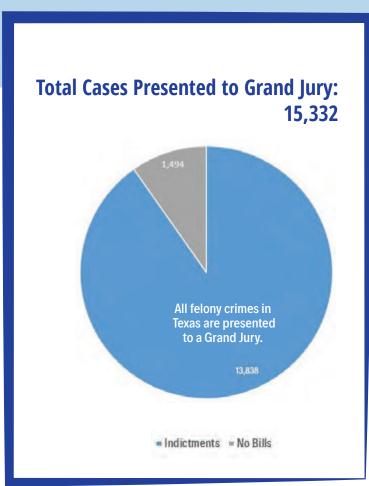
DRUG POSSESSION 4,369
THEFT 1,956
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT 1,385

DWI & Related Cases (by # of cases filed)

INTOXICATION MANSLAUGHTER
/ASSAULT
37

FELONY DWI 553

MISDEMEANOR DWI 4,661









Most Common Misdemeanor Offense

POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA, <2 OZ.

5,024
CASES FILED

5,500 5,151 5,250 5,000 4,728 4,750 4,500 4,250 4,000 3,804 3,750 3,500 3,250 3,000 2,750 2,500 2,250 Filings for 2,000 **Mental Health Commitments** 1,500 1,250 1,000 750 500

■ 2015 = 2016 = 2017

Requests for Protective Orders

2017: 1,973 2016: 2,022

Deferred Prosecution Program

Diversion program designed to give first-time youthful nonviolent offenders a second chance.

89% COMPLETION RATE
394 PARTICIPANTS IN 2017

IN THE COMMUNI









BY DIVISION

168 ATTORNEYS 98 STAFF 45 INVESTIGATORS

BY ETHNICITY

225 CAUCASIAN 45 AFRICAN AMERICAN 34 HISPANIC 6 ASIAN I NATIVE AMERICAN

BY GENDER



178 FEMALE 133 MALE (C)

81%

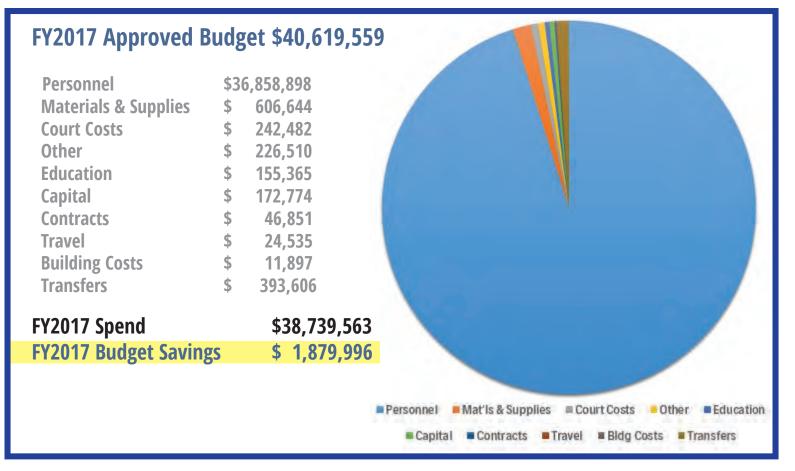
OF CDA EMPLOYEES ARE INVOLVED IN A **COMMUNITY GROUP OR ACTIVITY**

THE NUMBER OF OUR ATTORNEYS WHO ARE **BOARD CERTIFIED BY THE TEXAS BOARD OF** LEGAL SPECIALIZATION.

3 HOLD CERTIFICATIONS IN MORE THAN ONE AREA OF EXPERTISE.

PERCENTAGE OF OUR ATTORNEYS WHO HOLD THIS DESIGNATION - MORE THAN TWICE THE STATE AVERAGE.

FINANCIAL REPORT



BRADY: DA DOG

Our CDA emotional support canine, Brady continues to be our most popular employee. This professionaly trained 3 year old Golden Retriever rescue has won the hearts of those in the courthouse by providing kind, unconditional support to anyone in need.

On an average day at work, Brady may sit quietly with a victim of child abuse, provide warm comfort for a sexual assault survivor, or lend his soothing presence to family members waiting for a victim to finish difficult testimony. Nothing makes him happier than to see a child or a police officer in uniform, and he's off to introduce himself to a new friend.

Since starting with the office in January 2016, Brady has been able to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of people who have come through the courthouse, and it is common for people who have spent time with him to ask to come back and see him again well after their cases have been resolved. For all his good deeds, Brady was honored in a proclamation by the Legislature this year, which is proudly displayed in our 4th floor internal lobby.



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENGE

One in 3 women in Tarrant County will experience intimate partner violence at some point in her lifetime – almost 10 percent higher than the national average. In 2016, CDA Wilson created a special prosecution team to focus exclusively on these cases, and 2017 was another busy and highly successful year for the unit.

Intimate partner violence is physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner of the victim. The unfortunate reality is that intimate partner violence crimes happen every day and reach every ethnicity, income level, age, gender, religious denomination, and other demographic in Tarrant County. This is simply unacceptable.

Our Intimate Partner Vlolence unit is comprised of 5 attorneys, 3 investigators and a support staff member. Each member of the team volunteers for this unit, and they are tireless in their commitment to prosecuting abusers, protecting the survivors, and educating the public about this type of crime.



The unit had a 98.6 percent success rate in prosecuting the cases in their unit, including securing higher sentences for many offenders. In the first two trials handled by the team, the defendants received 50– and 70–year prison sentences for their Assaults – an important goal in demonstrating to abusers that we will prosecute them to the full extent of the law for their actions. The team has also committed itself to defending those who are subjected to sexual assault while in a relationship. In the case of State of Texas v. Austin Payne in August, they sent a very strong message by winning a 53 year prison sentence for a violent man who had repeatedly sexually assaulted his girlfriend.

In October of 2017, in coordination with National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, our office launched its first public awareness campaign, designed to bring attention to the prevelance of intimate partner violence in our community, and to put abusers on notice that we will not stand for their offensive actions.

This type of abuse does not happen in a vacuum. For this project, we reached out to familiar faces from around the community to join us in sending a staunch warning to abusers: Not in My County. The effort brought together high-profile residents such as Roger Staubach, TCU Football coach Gary Patterson, Texas Rangers Manager Jeff Banister and Outfielder Ryan Rua, with police chiefs, local and state officials, first responders, community, religious and non-profit leaders, all to share this united message.

Law enforcement agencies, including the Tarrant County Sheriff, Fort Worth, Arlington, HEB and Richland Hills Police Chiefs, and out of area supported demonstrated their commitment to this cause with a companion message for offenders: Not on My Watch.

Our message was featured prominently on our social media channels and in the news media throughout the month of October, highlighting the photos of those who support the cause, and sharing statistics, information and resources to educate the public about intimate partner violence in our community.









The members of our team also work diligently with our community partners to spread education about this issue. During 2017 they organized 17 training programs with local police departments to inform police officers of the targeted work the team was doing, and how the two agencies could best work together to secure the best evidence-based prosecutions of these dangerous offenders. Our local police partners have been integral in the ability to better make these cases and ensure these abusers are not going without reprecussions for their actions.

The unit members also gave 39 talks to community organizations in 2017, from non-profit groups to business organizations to schools and churches, creating awareness, and educating residents on the resources available for those who experience, or know someone who is experiencing, intimate partner violence.

Thirteen men and women, two children and one infant were murdered in intimate partner violence crimes in Tarrant County in 2017.

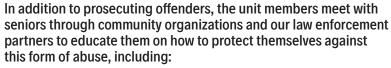
"Not in my County."



ELDER FINANCIAL FRAUD

Elder financial fraud is the illegal or improper use of an older person's funds or property, whether by a known or unknown person. The aging of the Baby Boomer generation is creating record numbers of senior Americans, and it is estimated that \$3 billion is being stolen annually from seniors in the U.S.

In May of 2017, Sharen Wilson created the Elder Financial Fraud special unit, designed to serve as a community resource addressing the special needs of elderly victims through a mission of aggressive prosecution, education and deterrence. The unit consists of 2 experienced prosecutors, 2 investigators and a support staff member, who all focus exclusively on financial crimes against the elderly in Tarrant County. By the end of 2017, 79 cases were filed with the unit, many of which include multiple victims. One such case is highlighted in our "Year in Review" section on page 13.



- Instructing bank and credit union employees how to protect the financial assets of their elderly customers;
- Training police and public safety personnel to be aware of special issues involving financial crimes against the elderly, to ensure time-sensitive resources are secured;
- Working with established community services and businesses to develop a comprehensive approach to serving our senior population.

In this vein, one of the unit's first projects was establishing a partnership with Guardianship Services to create the Financial Exploitation Prevention Center of Tarrant County (FEPC). This new one–stop shop was created to most efficiently and effectively connect Tarrant's seniors with the vast network of resources available to them in our area. The FEPC can be reached at 817.720.6556.





FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION PREVENTION CENTER OF TARRANT COUNTY (817) 720-6556



OUR GROWING COUNTY

A region growing as rapidly and consistently as ours brings many new challenges for local government, from the strain on transportation infrastructure, to the increased public safety concerns of a larger population.

In 2017, there were 44,522 criminal cases filed with this office – a more than 7 percent increase over 2016. The prosecutors in every criminal case are responsible by law for reviewing and making available to the defense every piece of evidence gathered by law enforcement agencies. This includes the ever–increasing amount of digital media evidence (DME) being submitted, which is all evidence gathered through digital tools, such as body cams, computers and cell phone. In Tarrant County, where we are dealing with both the escalating use of digital data and a quickly escalating population, this creates an enormous increase in the volume of evidence and workload faced by our employees.

Between 2015 and 2016, the amount of DME received by our office annually had grown from 6.07 Terabytes of data to 82.22 Terabytes. In 2017, this number soared past IT estimates to 121.67 Terabytes. Each Terabyte is roughly 1 trillion bytes of information, or 2,000 viewing hours per Terabyte received. As the public increasingly expects digital evidence in criminal cases, police departments around the county continue to expand their use of body cameras, neighborhoods and businesses implement more advanced surveillance tools, and the public at large actively record their daily lives, the level of DME will continue to skyrocket.

We plan judiciously on how to best utilize our resources to account for the changing landscape. The Commissioners' Court graciously voted to create 10 new attorney positions in our office to handle this growing workload – 5 for FY2017, and 5 for FY2018. We are working with the Information Technology Department to modernize our office technology, including new computers, increased memory storage, and trial presentation tools to keep up with the latest digital advances.

We also continue to work very closely with our law enforcement partners. There are 55 law enforcement agencies in Tarrant County, including 41 municipal police departments. In addition to the work we do with them on cases, an attorney and investigator from our office is assigned as a liaison to each police department to ensure open and ongoing communication between each partner. As we develop new specialty units, we have actively incorporated our law enforcement partners, providing training opportunities and personal contacts to departments, as well as engagin their expertise on these topics to help ensure we are putting together the strongest fact—based arguments, now and for the future.







THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Some of 2017's Felony Prosecutions

The State of Texas v. Ghufran Zafar

In this case of Intimate Partner Violence, Ghufran Zafar was found guilty of the murder of his wife, Asma, who he shot in front of their young children. Testimony detailed numerous allegations of control and abuse in the relationship, including him regularly searching her cellphone for calls or texts, setting the home's security system during the day so he would be alerted if she left the house, and physically assaulting her while she was pregnant. Asma was on the phone with 911 during their altercation the night of the murder, and the call disconnected just before it is believed he shot her in the forehead. He initially fled the scene with the couple's youngest child, but was captured by police while driving past the home later that night.

Sentence: Life in Prison

Prosecutors: Kevin Boneberg, Ashlea Deener CDA Investigator: Don Pilcher CDA Victim Advocate: Gabriela Lepe Arlington Police Department: Detective Steve Griesback

The State of Texas v. Howard Baker

In this high profile trial, Baker, the President of the Fort Worth arm of the notorious Bandidos motorcycle gang, was charged with organizing a 2015 ambush by dozens of Bandidos and other supporting gang members at the Gators Inn bar in Fort Worth. In a barrage of gunfire, the bikers stormed the club where members of another gang were present, dragged a rival member out onto the front lawn, assaulting and ultimately murdering him in front of his wife and friends.

Sentence: Directing the Activities of a Criminal Street Gang, 45 yrs in prison;
Engaging in the Activities of a Criminal Street Gang, 40 yrs.; Murder, 40 yrs.
Prosecutors: Pamela Boggess, Allenna Bangs CDA Investigators: Don Pilcher, Booker Hamilton
CDA Victim Advocate: Laura Flores Fort Worth Police Department: Dets. Tom O'Brien, Matt Baroon,
Jerry Cedillo & Ernie Pate, Ofc. Steve Groppi

The State of Texas v. Brian Keith Norton

Norton approached an elderly victim with the offer of home repair for a reasonable price. While doing the inspection, Norton stole a credit card and the victim's deceased husband's wedding ring, then ran up \$1,500 in charges, and pawned the family heirloom. In addition to Norton being found guilty of Credit or Debit Card Abuse of an Elderly Victim, prosecutors were able to recover the wedding ring for the victim.

Sentence: 10 yrs in prison
Prosecutors: Ty Stimpson, Matt Smid CDA Investigator: Greg McNeese
North Richland Hills Police Department: Det. Gabriel Cespedes

The State of Texas v. Eron Michael Spivey

Jordan Price, the 2 year old son of Spivey's girlfriend, was left in his care. He took the child to work with him one morning as he had done in the past, but coworkers noticed the boy was lethargic and unresponsive. After some time, Spivey finally took the child to the emergency room, where he was declared dead from what was eventually determined to be a prior beating. By tracing Spivey's movements that day, it was learned that he had driven to multiple locations with the unresponsive child, including a dollar store and drugstore before seeking medical aid. Spivey was found guilty of Capital Murder.

Sentence: Life in Prison without the possibility of parole
Prosecutors: Kim D'Avignon, Kelly Meador CDA Investigator: Mike Weber
CDA Victim Advocate: Cecilia Jones Grand Prairie Police Department: Dets. Rick Branum & Brad Makovy

The State of Texas v. Melvin Knox

Almost 44 years after the incident, prosecutors brought Melvin Knox before a judge to plead guilty to the shooting and stabbing death of his 14 year old best friend when Knox was just 15. Donald Rodgers was murdered in Knox's parents' home in August of 1973, but the case had gone cold over the years. After diligent work by Fort Worth PD cold case detectives, Knox finally confessed to the crime, and the case was turned over to our office for prosecution. In the interim years, Knox had gone on to commit additional crimes, mostly related to drug and theft offenses, and his pleas for leniency were not granted.

Sentence: 40 yrs in prison

Prosecutors: Matt Smid, Brooke Panuthos CDA Investigator: Darla Dowell CDA Victim Advocate: Allison Bowne Fort Worth Police Department: Det. Mike McCormack

Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office



The State of Texas v. Chance William Moore

Moore, the twenty-three year old son of an Everman home daycare operator, was charged with molesting a young child under his mother's care. During the investigation, additional victims made outcries of past abuse by Moore while they were being kept at the daycare. He was found guilty of Continuous Sexual Assault of a Child and Indecency with a Child by Contact.

Sentence: 40 yrs in prison (Continuous); 10 yrs (Indecency)
Prosecutors: Dawn Ferguson, Jordan Rolfe CDA Investigator: John McCaskill
CDA Victim Advocate: Laura Flores Everman Police Department

The State of Texas v. Clarence David Mallory

Mallory was convicted of Capital Murder for the beating death of his girlfriend's former manager at a local clothing store, in an attempt to rob the store of its "Black Friday" profits. The victim, Ashlea Harris, was severely beaten and then set on fire by Mallory and his co-defendant, Carter Cervantes. The case received national attention when it was profiled on NBC's "Dateline" in late 2017.

Sentence: Life in Prison without the possibility of parole
Prosecutors: Kevin Rousseau, Ashlea Deener CDA Investigator: Danny Nutt
CDA Victim Advocate: Cecilia Jones Fort Worth Police Department: Dets. Jerry Cedillo & Ernie Pate

The State of Texas v. Gerry Handsborough

Gerry Handsborough was a regular customer at the Military Gun Supply shop in Fort Worth, and was known by the store's clerk, Iraq War veteran Eric Peterson. After visiting the store to purchase ammunition one day, Handsborough left, only to return moments later wearing a mask and wielding an AR-15 rifle. Without warning, he shot Peterson multiple times, even following him and continuing to fire at close range as Peterson attempted to crawl to safety. Handsborough gave no explanation for his actions, and smiled as the horrific surveillance video from the incident was played in court. He was found guilty of Murder by a Tarrant County jury, and sentenced by Judge Scott Wisch.

Sentence: 75 yrs in prison

Prosecutors: Lisa Callaghan, DJ Estes CDA Investigator: Jim Rizy CDA Victim Advocate: Elizabeth Garcia Fort Worth Police Department: Dets. Matt Barron & Tom O'Brien

The State of Texas v. Michael Waters

Home is supposed to be a safe place. That was not the case for any children who had to live in the proximity to Michael Waters. Waters was accused of sexually abusing not only many of his own children, but also many of the children of the women with whom he had relationships. The abuse took place over a period of years, as Waters would move on to younger victims as older children aged. After a trial which included the emotional testimony of many survivors of his abuse, the jury of Tarrant County residents found Waters guilty of the Continuous Sexual Abuse of a Child Under 14, with multiple victims.

Sentence: Life in Prison

Prosecutors: Dale Smith, Kelly Meador CDA Investigator: Matt Hardy CDA Victim Advocate: Cecilia Jones Fort Worth Police Department: Det. Scott Banes

The State of Texas v. Anthony Anderson

Anderson attacked a young woman in a downtown Fort Worth parking garage, tried to sexually assault her, and severely beat her. As he ran from the scene, he stole her phone. Anderson later sold the phone, and the man who purchased it tracked down the original owner, who was able to turn over to police photos Anderson had taken of himself with the phone's camera before selling it. He was subsequently arrested for another sexual assault, at which point he was connected to the photos and surveillance video from the scene of the crime. He had a previous history of exposing himself downtown.

Sentence: 60 yrs in prison, \$10,000 fine

Prosecutors: Tim Rodgers, Dustin Trammell CDA Investigator: Dara Couch CDA Victim Advocate: Cecilia Jones Fort Worth Police Department: Det. David Hughes

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