

**Tarrant County  
Criminal District Attorney  
2020  
Annual Report**

**Sharen Wilson**



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# Message from Sharen Wilson



Justice for all.

That always has been my mission.

It became challenging to deliver on that in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread and the Texas Supreme Court delayed jury trials for the year.

Our criminal attorneys embraced technology to move cases forward – using Zoom to hold hearings, sending plea paperwork electronically and making sure defendants in jail could participate in online hearings.

Our civil attorneys worked at times around the clock to give sound legal advice to officials throughout Tarrant County, drafting emergency orders, preparing health and safety policies and more.

In June came the tragic killing of George Floyd in the custody of Minneapolis Police, which prompted our office to open a dialogue to let people in our office speak freely about the differences among us and increase diversity training.

I am proud to work every day with the dedicated, talented employees in this office.

As we prepare for the day judges reopen their courtrooms for trials, we remain true to our mission of seeking justice for all in Tarrant County.

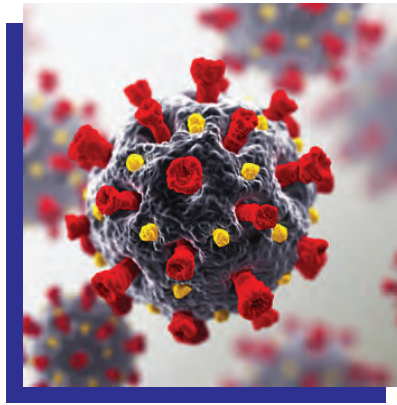
Here's to a better 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharen Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharen Wilson

# As COVID cases rise, so does violent crime



COVID-19 had a massive impact on every facet of our operation in 2020. But this office never closed, and neither did law enforcement agencies. Officers continued arresting and charging people for committing crimes.

Despite efforts to protect people from COVID, the number of people infected with the virus grew ... so did the number of violent crimes.

Overall, violent crimes increased by 18% – or 1,666 cases – from 2019 to 2020.

Throughout the year, the numbers got

worse. Homicides went up 22%, aggravated assaults and attempted murders climbed by 26%, sexual assault increased 8% and family violence rose 22%.

Prosecutors were not able to take these cases to trial, after the Texas Supreme Court ordered no juries in the courthouse to prevent the spread of infections.

Our attorneys turned to Zoom, where judges, prosecutors, jailed defendants and their attorneys met on computer screens to conduct much of the court's business.



# Empty courtrooms, growing case load

Many criminal cases cannot be disposed of with plea offers and must go to trial. After shutdown orders were issued by the Texas Supreme Court, untried cases started piling up quickly.

In fact, the untried felony and misdemeanor case load between 2019 and 2020 nearly doubled. In January 2020, there were 29,253 pending cases. By December 2020, the pending caseload soared to 43,759.

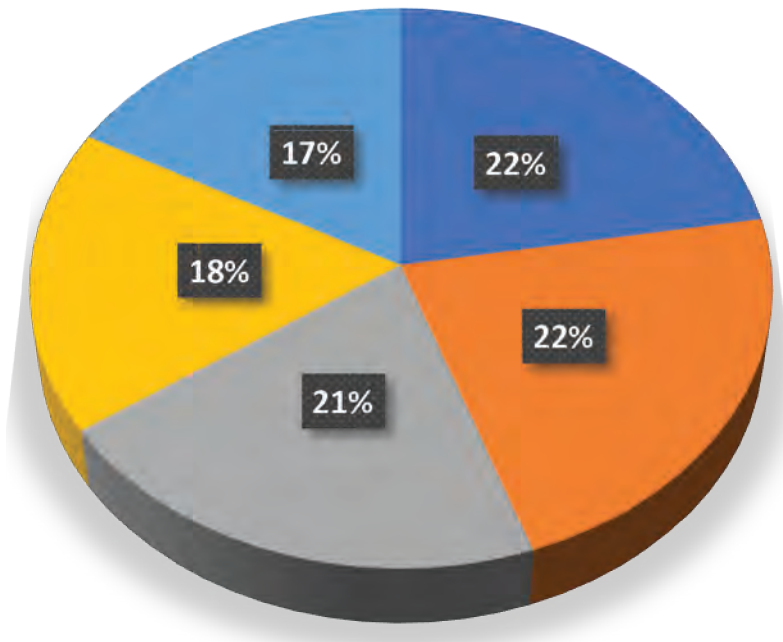


<b>December</b>	<b>43,759</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>42,206</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>40,310</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>38,384</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>36,933</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>36,316</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>35,198</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>33,033</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>29,882</b>
<b>March</b>	<b>29,614</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>29,096</b>
<b>January</b>	<b>29,253</b>



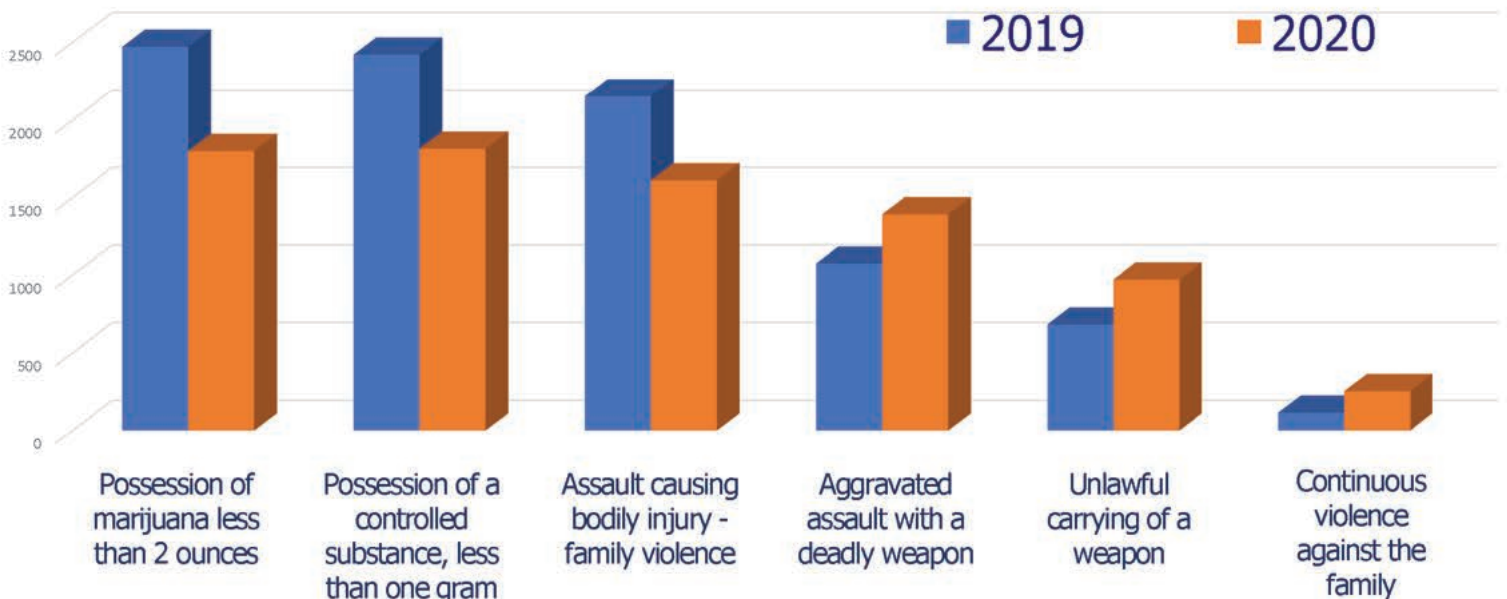
# Crime Trends

## Top 5 Crimes in 2020



1. Possession of marijuana less than 2 ounces (misdemeanor)
2. Possession of a controlled substance, less than one gram (felony)
3. Assault causing bodily injury- family violence (misdemeanor)
4. Driving while intoxicated (misdemeanor)
5. Theft of property, greater than \$100 but less than \$750 (misdemeanor)

## Crimes up and down in 2020





## Second Chances

A trial and a criminal record that will stay with a defendant their entire life does not always serve the best interest of justice. Our office created a new program to give some first-time offenders a second chance to get clean and stay out of trouble.

That program is called the **Deferred Prosecution Initiative (DPI)** and it gives those 25 and older, who haven't been in legal trouble before, a second chance to remove the crime from their record if they successfully pass the six month program and stay clean. This program is just getting underway and this office is reaching out to first offenders in the community who could benefit from not having a criminal record.

**DPI** is an expansion of the **Deferred Prosecution Program (DPP)**, which this office started decades ago for young offenders between 17 and 24 years old. Both programs are open to non-violent, non-gang member offenders who are willing to self correct and change the way they act. The DPP program has successfully given hundreds of young first time offenders a clean slate. During 2020, despite the limitations of COVID restrictions, 145 youthful first-time offenders completed the program and can apply to expunge the charge, to prevent them from having a criminal record.

Our office also created an opportunity for anyone with an outstanding misdemeanor **marijuana charge** to get it dismissed by providing proof of three negative drug tests for three consecutive months.

"One of the goals of the criminal justice system is rehabilitation," Sharen Wilson said. "Sobriety is the beginning of that rehabilitation.

"This program is for those willing to change their behavior and attain sobriety," she said. "We hope they realize they can have a life without crime and a life without drugs."

# Time to End Domestic Violence

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the country, the impact the virus had on Tarrant County was clear.

Violent crime spiked as frustration grew among those who lost their jobs or were forced to quarantine and couldn't leave home.

Many domestic violence victims couldn't get away to find a safe space. "We knew, obviously, that this was going to



be bad for people who are not safe at home, and were told to stay at home," said Allenna Bangs, an assistant criminal district attorney and chief of the Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) team creat-

ed in 2016 to crack down on a crisis level number of cases.

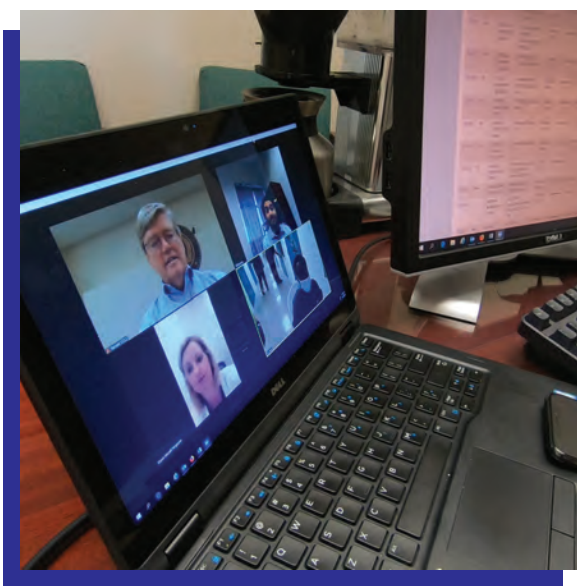
The first IPV homicide in 2020 happened right before shelter-in-place orders were issued in March.

**By the end of 2020, there were 19 adult and two unborn baby IPV murder victims in Tarrant County. That eclipsed the previous high number of IPV victims – 16 in both 2016 and 2017 – and was more than double the eight IPV murders in 2019.**

Some prosecutors increasingly checked in on victims, worried that they would be attacked again by offenders who had bonded out of jail amid concerns of COVID spread. Other prosecutors stringently monitored bond conditions, working to restrict offenders by requiring home confinement, no firearms and no contact with victims. "We worked to get them on home confinement so we could pay attention to them while we were waiting for court dates," Bangs said.

As all of this was going on, requests for protective orders took on a new pace, said Marvinna Robinson, an assistant criminal district attorney and chief of the Mental Health and Protective Orders team. She had to find a way to handle the soaring number of requests without the ability to have face-to-face meetings with victims.





Robinson's team of attorneys turned to Zoom for hosting online hearings with judges and clients seeking protective orders.

The staff had to prepare clients differently, explaining how hearings would work over the phone and online. "Our attorneys are doing a very good job presenting cases over Zoom," Robinson said. "But transitioning clients to Zoom – teaching them how it works, how to turn their microphones on, making sure everyone is where they need to be – takes time."

When someone submits a questionnaire, or request, for a protective order, the office typically responds in five days. The team was so swamped with new protocols because of COVID, however, that they couldn't respond in that time frame. So Robinson helped review paperwork, in addition to handling her regular duties, to get responses closer to the five-day mark.

In October, the Criminal District Attorney's Office again led our annual awareness campaign known as "Not in my County" to draw attention to – and work to stop – Intimate Partner Violence.

Members of the community, police chiefs and officers from across the county, prosecutors, healthcare workers and concerned citizens from every sector of Tarrant County posed for photos to spread the message of Not in my County.



Sharen Wilson and many others amplified the message by making videos proclaiming that it is long past time to end family violence.

The Not in my County campaign comes during Domestic Violence Awareness month and is geared to remind the community that victims of family violence are not alone.

# Teaching the next generation

Prosecutors, investigators and CDA staffers headed back to the classroom – virtually – in 2020. Their goal: Teach students about the criminal justice system.



This new program called Prosecutors in High School was the brainchild of CDA Chief of Staff Shannon Fletcher and developed by ACDA Matthew Jackson and Community Outreach Coordinator Amy Bearden.

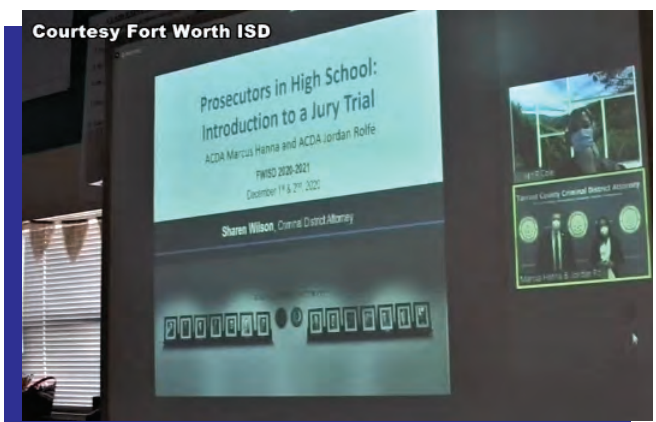
We partnered with the Fort Worth Independent School District to create this program that is geared to build trust between students and criminal justice partners. These classes are woven into the curriculum of Fort Worth school district classes, highlighting topics such as First Amendment rights and how jury trials work.

"We realized if we did these classes virtually, rather than in person, we could



reach hundreds of students at a time instead of just those in one classroom," Sharen Wilson said. "That's our goal – reaching as many students as possible."

As featured on NBC-5 News and by other north Texas media outlets, the classes were broadcast via Zoom to hundreds of students at Dunbar, Polytechnic, Diamond Hill-Jarvis, O.D. Wyatt, Eastern Hills and Western Hills high schools.





## Commitment to Diversity

2020 was an unprecedented year, not just because of COVID-19.

The deaths of George Floyd and others stirred serious conversations across the nation and in our office about racial equality in the criminal justice system.

Our office has long been dedicated to boosting diversity among employees. The events of 2020 prompted us to begin talking about differences among us.

A Harvard Law School report, published in 2020, detailed racial disparities in the criminal justice system. It highlighted facts that Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately stopped and interrogated, given more serious initial charges and sentenced to more days behind bars than white people.

"We have to be cognizant of the data and what it says," Sharen Wilson said. "There has been implicit bias in the criminal justice system in the past. We have to recognize that it still exists. That's the only way we can move forward and make

sure that everyone is doing their absolute best to eliminate or reduce any future biases."

This office is committed to ensuring that all employees can work together in a discrimination-free environment. We enhanced training to include diversity and inclusion, managing bias and preventing harassment and discrimination.

"This is something we all need to talk about and work on," Sharen Wilson said. "This office has long worked to boost diversity."

**Across Texas, Black attorneys make up 6% of all active state bar attorneys. In Tarrant County, Black attorneys make up 12.97% of all Assistant Criminal District Attorneys. Overall in this office, 48 of our 331 employees are Black, 41 are Hispanic, four are Asian, one is Middle Eastern and one is Native American. By gender, 142 of our employees are male and 189 are female.**

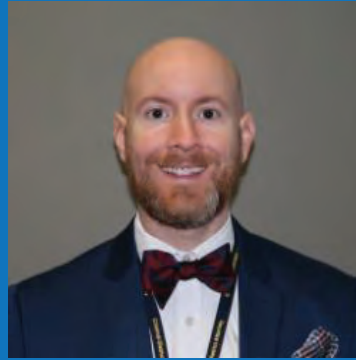
# Honors



**Leslie Hunt**  
ACDA  
Chief, Civil Division



**Ty Stimpson**  
ACDA  
Mental Health



**Aulstin Gardiner**  
ACDA  
Family Protective Services



**Shelby White**  
ACDA  
Post Conviction

## Super Lawyers®



Leslie Hunt, Chief of the Civil Division, was named on the 2020 list of the state's top attorneys published by Texas Super Lawyers magazine.

Thompson Reuters researchers compile the list based on nominations solicited from more than 70,000 practicing lawyers in Texas. Less than 5 percent of all Texas lawyers earn the honor each year.



The Texas Association of Counties honored our Intimate Partner Violence team with a 2020 County Best Practices Award.

The team created a new intake initiative for misdemeanor Assault Bodily Injury, Family Violence cases.

The team reviewed more than 1,200 misdemeanor IPV cases to determine if the cases were filed

properly, and contacted victims within the first week of their attack, improving the chances of a successful prosecution.



# Best of the Best



Jose "Joe" Carrizal was named Peace Officer of the Year by the Texas Gang Investigators Association in October 2020. Carrizal, an investigator in our Gang Unit,



the association stated. "Joe is the consummate team player."

Carrizal joined the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office four years ago after a career that took him from El Paso to Afghanistan and to Austin before finding his way to the Metroplex.

He has gained a reputation for diligent and thorough work. For example, while investigating a Capital Murder case, he uncovered a second homicide. The search warrants he wrote and executed led to new evidence that ultimately helped prosecutors prove the case that earned the defendant a death sentence.



was nominated by officers from three departments who said his "diligence, attention to detail and his willingness to help" were among the reasons they proposed him for the honor.

"Beyond his investigative ability, Joe is called a cop's cop and is always willing to go out of his way to help another officer,"



# The year in review

## Before the Texas Supreme Court delayed jury trials in 2020 because of COVID-19, some felony cases were prosecuted:

\* **Gabriel Delgado** was tried for the murder of his ex-girlfriend's boyfriend. A Tarrant County jury convicted him and sentenced Delgado to 75 years in prison.

\* **Dale Heide** was tried for continuous sexual assault of a child under 14 years of age. A jury convicted and sentenced Heide to 25 years in prison without the possibility of parole.

\* **Shannon Williams** was tried for continuous sexual abuse of a child under 14 years of age. A Tarrant County jury convicted and sentenced him to 50 years in prison with no possibility of parole.

\* **Paul Labar** was tried for the stabbing death of his mother. He pled guilty and accepted a sentence of 60 years in prison.

\* **Skipper Glenn Crawley**, a local gymnastics coach, was charged with aggravated sexual assault of four differ-

ent victims. Prosecutors secured a conviction and a 50-year prison sentence by a negotiated plea essentially "on the eve of the trial."

\* **Justin Lacey Ray** was tried for attacking a woman who was jogging along Fort Worth's Trinity Trails – and for assaulting a woman in a dog park two weeks earlier. He was convicted on several charges in both incidents and was sentenced to 50 years for attacking the jogger and 20 years for attacking the other woman.

\* **Randy Estrada** was charged with indecency of a child by sexual contact. His trial was granted an exception by the Texas Supreme Court. The judge used three different courtrooms and social distancing to hold the trial. The jury convicted Estrada and sentenced him to three 20-year sentences.



# The office of Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney



Sharen Wilson has served as Tarrant County's Criminal District Attorney since January 2015.

As the leader of the county's largest "law firm," she has modernized the office, reorganized resources and created new teams to meet the growing demands of the criminal justice system.

Our mission is to enhance public safety through rigorous 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 crime and other members of the public.

**This office is different from other District or County Attorney offices across the state because it handles both criminal and civil matters.**

**The Criminal Division:** This is the largest division in our office. More than 150 licensed attorneys in this division handle cases in the Grand Jury as well as in Felony and Misdemeanor courts. Our teams include Intake, Juvenile, Post-Conviction, White Collar crimes, Special Victims, Adult Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence, Worthless (Hot) Checks and Gang crimes. Larry Moore is Division Chief assisted by three Deputy Chiefs, Tiffany Burks, Dale Smith and Riley Shaw.

**The Civil Division:** This division serves as general counsel for Tarrant County and its elected or appointed officials, including the Commissioners' Court, the sheriff and the district and county clerks. Attorneys represent Tarrant County and its officials in civil litigation in areas such as property damage, contracts, collections and civil rights. They also help victims of family violence with protective orders and represent the Department of Family and Protective Services in cases where abuse or neglect are alleged. Leslie Hunt is chief of this division. David Hudson is the deputy chief.

**The Investigative Division:** This division is staffed by 49 investigators who help prosecutors by evaluating and helping prepare cases for trial. They routinely review cases, determine areas that need more investigation, find witnesses and verify facts and information for cases. They also can arrest suspects, interview witnesses and help prosecutors prepare cases for the Grand Jury to consider. Tammie Hughes is chief of this division.

**The Chief of Staff Division:** This division is made up of more than 100 non-lawyer, non-investigator employees who handle personnel matters, business operations, information technology, facilities, community outreach, communications and Victim Services. This division also oversees the annual budget and tightly manages expenditures to save tax payer dollars. Shannon Fletcher is chief of staff.

# Keeping Skills Sharp

Climbing a mountain takes well practiced skills, not unlike prosecuting criminal cases in a courtroom. To sharpen and improve the skills of our assistant criminal district attorneys, when trials were not possible because of COVID restrictions in 2020, we practiced.

Many of our attorneys participated in mock trials to simulate what happens during a real trial. Misdemeanor attorneys took turns acting as prosecutors, defense attorneys and witnesses. Felony attorneys served as judges, jurors and investigators and actual forensic scientists testified.

“Mock trials have been a recent training tool,” said Lisa Callaghan, an ACDA and assistant chief over the misdemeanor team. “In usual times, we sit with the attorneys in actual trials and train in that fashion. Since we have not been able, due to COVID-19, to have jury trials, this is a perfect time to have the attorneys hone their skills, or help keep them sharp, by practicing on each other.”

This office also developed Continuing Legal Education (CLE) opportunities for attorneys who could no longer attend in-person training. Attorneys, investigators, police officers and other experts lectured on topics ranging from handling bail, bonds, hearings and writs to cell phone forensics and how to retrieve evidence. The trainings were videoed and made available for prosecutors to watch from their own computers.





# CDA Employees

In 2020, there were many dedicated employees who made it possible for this office to stay up and running despite COVID. We salute all of our hard-working members of the team for their contributions and innovative ideas on how to keep seeking justice during a pandemic.

## Most tenured attorney Ann Diamond

Ann was hired in January 1984 as an Assistant Criminal District Attorney in the Civil Division. She has worked for three Criminal District Attorneys – Tim Curry, Joe Shannon and Sharen Wilson. When she was first hired, Sharen Wilson was prosecuting criminal cases in the office as an ACDA herself. She has served as President of the Tarrant County Bar Association and as the State Bar President's appointed chair of the State Bar Court Rules Committee. Her best known case may have been when she defended the Texas law that outlawed the possession of horsemeat for sale for human consumption. Ann has served 36 years.

## Most tenured support staff Susan Boudreaux



Susan was hired in February 1980 as a filing secretary. Her title now is a legal assistant. During her work day, Susan works hard to make sure that she has

all the accurate information for the case files she works on – and makes sure that all of the documents are properly attached to the cases – so that they can be filed and move forward in the criminal justice system. Susan has been with our office for 40 years.

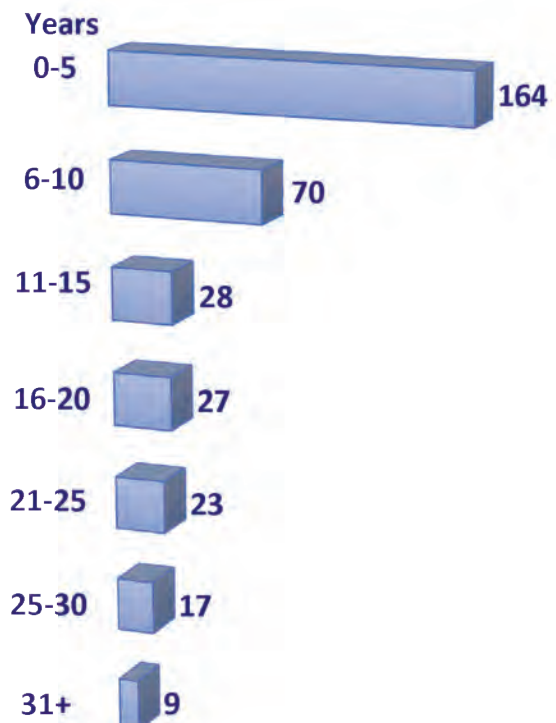
## Most tenured investigator Kevin McIntire



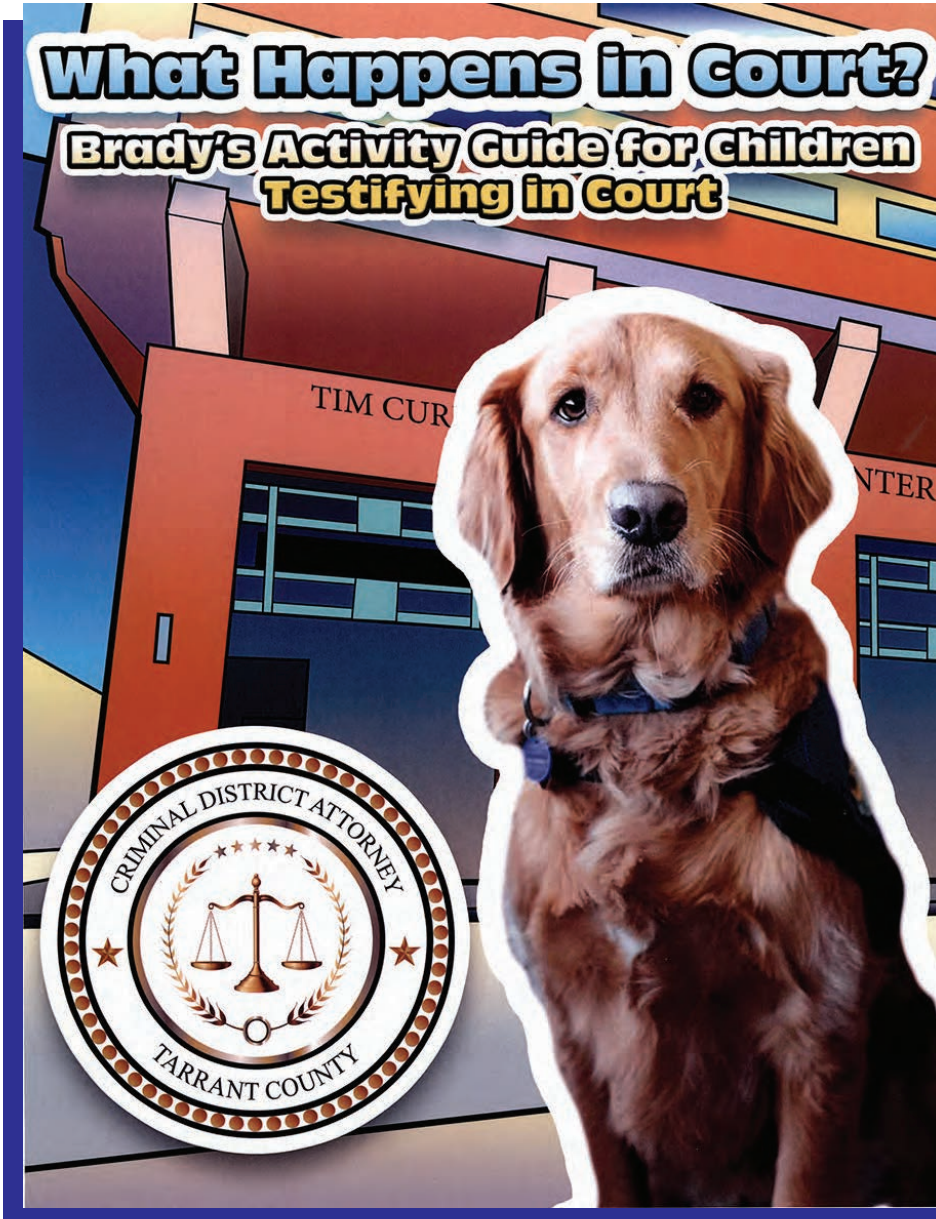
Kevin was hired in February 1995 as an investigator, a career position he maintains today. His job has taken him from the Hot Check Department to White Collar Crimes to Criminal District Court

No. 1 and finally to Criminal District Court No. 2. But he also has returned, in a way, to his roots. When he began working here, he oversaw the Deferred Prosecution Program and remains deeply involved with the program today. He enjoys working with victims and witnesses, helping them navigate their way through the criminal justice system and understand how the legal process works. Kevin has served 25 years.

## Numbers of CDA employees by years of service



# Brady strikes a pose



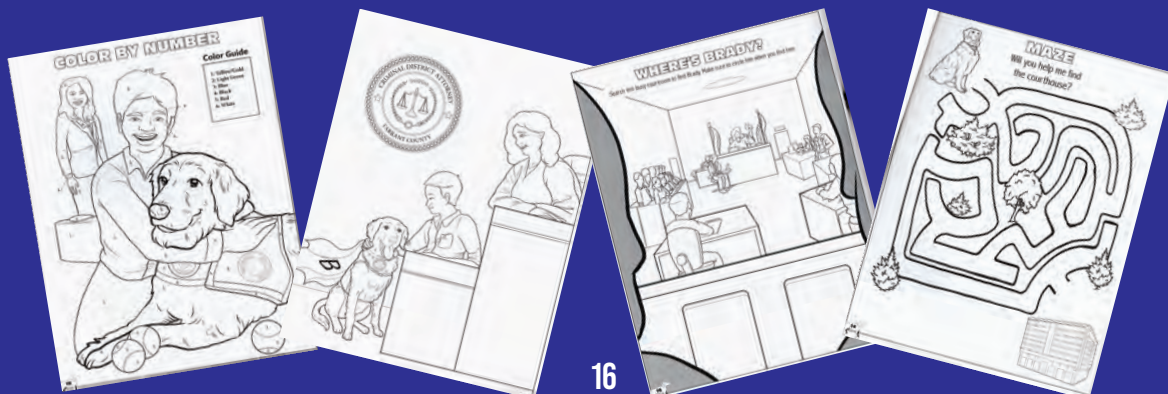
Brady, our emotional support dog, made the cover of a magazine in 2020. Well, the cover of a coloring book.

The 5-year-old was featured in the 2019 Golden Retriever Rescue of North Texas calendar for the month of September.

In 2020, he became the star featured on the cover – and on nearly every page inside – of the 20-page coloring book produced by this office.

The book is called "What Happens in Court? Brady's Activity Guide for Children Testifying in Court." It is given to young victims who come to the CDA's Office.

We know the criminal justice system may be hard to understand and intimidating for children. We hope this book can help explain some of the complicated processes and help reduce their stress level as well.



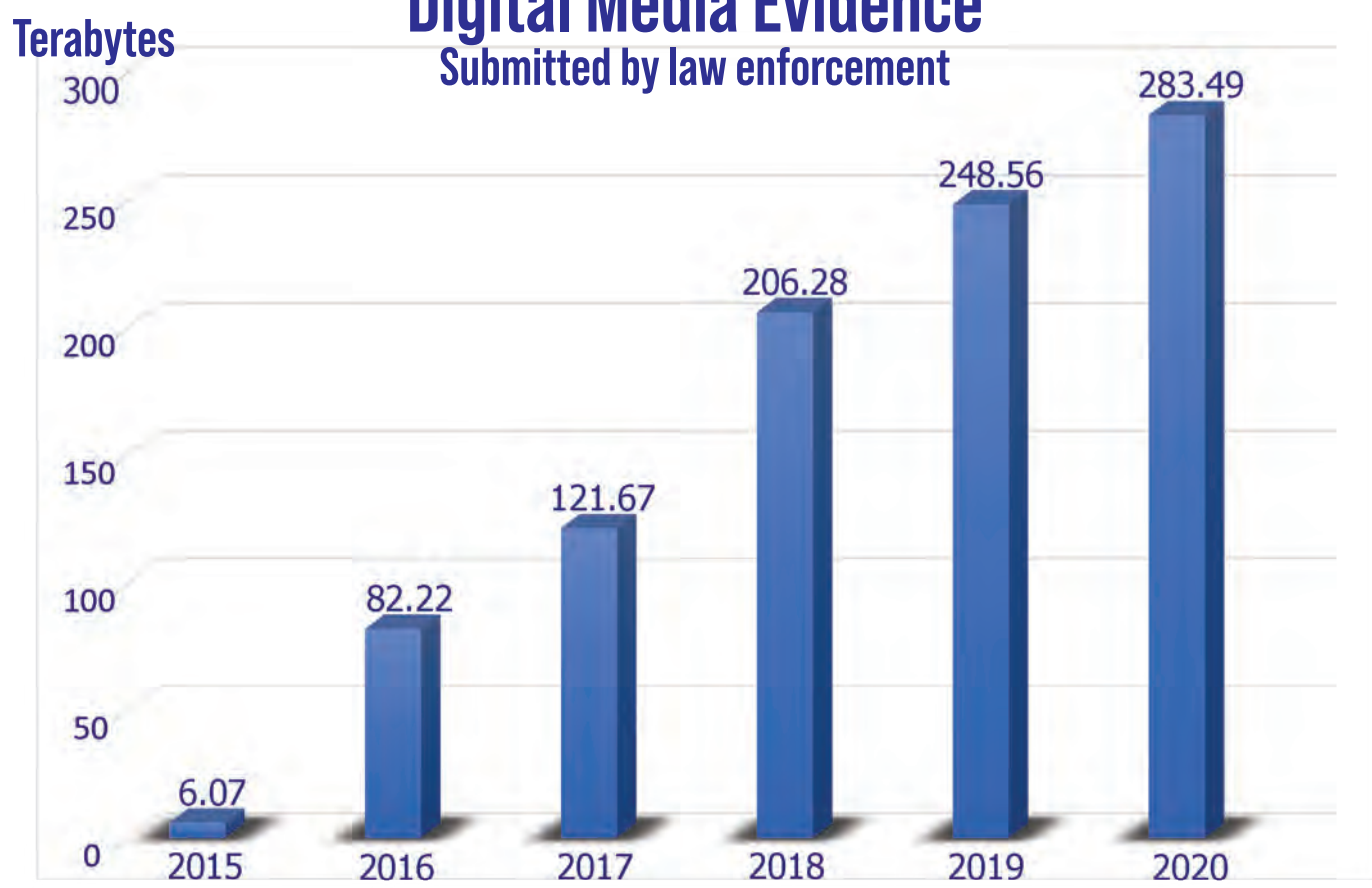
All of the video from police bodycams, dashcams, surveillance video, cell phone data and car navigation systems must be examined and watched by our prosecutors. That takes a huge amount of time and takes up a lot of expensive computer storage space.

The amount of Digital Media Evidence (DME) submitted by police officers grows significantly every year.

Even though we had fewer cases filed in 2020, the amount of evidence gathered for those cases went up.



## Digital Media Evidence Submitted by law enforcement



One terabyte of video equals approximately 500 hours of viewing.



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