

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General:

What is going on with my case?

- Contact the Victim Services Division at 713-274-0250 to speak with the Victim Assistance Coordinator assigned to your case for any questions about the status of the case.

When is the next court date?

- You may contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator for any updates on your case.
- You may click on the following link to obtain the next court date:
www.hcdistrictclerk.com
- You may also register with VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) at 877-894-8463 (toll free) or www.vinelink.com .
- You will need the defendant's name and/or cause number.

Do I need to (or can I) come to court?

- You may come to court if you choose but you are not required to be there unless the case goes to trial, at which time you may be subpoenaed to testify.

Will I have to testify in court?

- If the case goes to trial, you will more than likely be subpoenaed to testify.

What happens if I am subpoenaed and don't come to court?

- If you have been subpoenaed to come to court and refuse, the judge has the authority to enforce that subpoena. If you have not been subpoenaed, you are not required to come to court and the case will proceed through the court system as usual.

How long does the court process take?

- Depending on the offense, a case can take anywhere from several months to 2 years or more to reach disposition.

Why does the case keep getting reset:

- During these court dates, the attorneys exchange information as it becomes available and it can take several months to obtain all the reports and information needed to prosecute the case. Also, there are many cases set on the docket for each day and the court may be in trial.

How will I know if the case goes to trial?

- For status of your case, contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250.
- You may also register with VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) at 877-894-8463 (toll free) or www.vinelink.com .
- You will need the defendant's name and/or cause number.

Will the defendant be in the courtroom during settings/trial?

- If the defendant is out on bond, he/she will be present in the courtroom during routine court settings. Since the pandemic, there is a possibility that the defendant's appearance will be waived.

- If the defendant is in jail, he/she will be brought to the courthouse and kept in a holding cell adjacent to the courtroom and will more than likely not be brought into the courtroom during routine court settings.
- The defendant will be in the courtroom during any hearing, plea, or trial.

Who is the prosecutor in my case?

- Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 for the name of the Assistant District Attorney (prosecutor) assigned to your case.

Why does the prosecutor keep changing?

- Prosecutors are routinely rotated around to different courts and divisions. Also, some rotation is necessary due to promotions and resignations.

Can I talk to or meet with the prosecutor?

- Prosecutors are in court daily and are available to meet with you by appointment only.
- Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 for the specific court's contact information.

Can I talk to the judge?

- The Code of Judicial Conduct does not allow the judge to speak directly to victims and/or witnesses.

Why hasn't anyone contacted me?

- We may not have your current contact information. Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250.

Can I get reimbursed for my losses?

- If you are a victim of a violent crime, it is possible that you may be reimbursed for some of your losses. Contact the Office of the Attorney General Crime Victims' Compensation Fund program at 1-800-983-9933 or www.texasattorneygeneral.gov
- If you are the victim of a property crime, contact the Harris County District Attorney's Office Restitution Center at 713-274-0010.

Can I get a copy of the offense report?

- The District Attorney's Office does not release reports initiated by another agency but you may contact the reporting agency to request a copy of the public record document.

Do I need to hire my own attorney?

- You are not required to hire an attorney but you may do so at your own expense.

What is a Grand Jury?

- A Grand Jury is a group of 12 Harris County citizens who decide if the State of Texas has enough evidence to proceed in the prosecution of a felony case. If the Grand Jury decides there is enough evidence to proceed, they return a True Bill, also known as an indictment. If the Grand Jury decides there is not enough evidence to proceed, the case will be No Billed and the charge will be dismissed.

Why did my case get dismissed?

- Cases are dismissed for a variety of reasons. Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 for more information.

How do I drop charges?

- The State of Texas files the charge against the defendant. The decision to dismiss charges rests with the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

How much time will the defendant get (punishment range)?

- The punishment range varies depending on the type of crime and other factors. Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 to be connected with an Assistant District Attorney who will explain the range of punishment in your particular case.

Who do I contact once the defendant is sentenced to prison or probation?

- If the defendant is sentenced to prison, you may contact the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division at 1-800-848-4284 or www.tdcj.texas.gov
- If the defendant is sentenced to probation, you may visit the Harris County Community Supervision & Corrections website at <https://cscd.harriscountytexas.gov> for more information.

Jail/Bond

Will I be notified when the defendant is arrested?

- Typically you will not be notified when the defendant is arrested.
- You may determine if the defendant has been arrested by visiting: www.hcdistrictclerk.com
- You may contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 for more information.

Is the defendant still in jail?

- You may check if the defendant is in jail by visiting: <https://www.harriscountysoc.org/JailInfo/Default>

What is the defendant's bond amount?

- Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator for information on bond amounts.

Why does the defendant have a bond?

- The Texas Constitution guarantees bond in all cases except certain capital murders.
- Ultimately, the amount of the bond is the judge's decision.

Will I be notified if the defendant bonds out of jail?

- You may register with VINE at 877-894-8463 (toll free) or www.vinelink.com to be notified of a change in custody status of the defendant.

What is an ICE hold?

- An ICE hold is a detainer placed by the Department of Homeland Security Investigations. They will determine if the defendant will be deported.

Victim Services

What is a Victim Assistance Coordinator?

- A Victim Assistance Coordinator is a liaison between you and the Assistant District Attorney.
- A Victim Assistance Coordinator provides you with your rights as a crime victim, attends court proceedings with you if requested, keeps you updated on the status of your case as requested, and answers any questions or concerns you may have about the criminal justice system.

What is a Victim Impact Statement form and what is it used for?

- A victim impact statement is a form used to gather information about how the crime has affected you physically, financially, and emotionally. This form follows the defendant through the criminal justice system and can be used by the judge when determining sentencing and also by the Board of Pardons & Parole when determining parole eligibility.
- You may also give a verbal victim impact statement in court as testimony during the trial and after the defendant has been sentenced (also known as Allocution or Right to Speak).

What is Crime Victims' Compensation and how do I apply?

- Crime Victims' Compensation is a state fund that may assist victims of violent crimes with certain expenses such as medical bills, counseling, loss of wages, and funeral expenses.
- You may complete an application to the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Fund by visiting the website of the Office of the Attorney General at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.

The defendant keeps calling/texting/harassing me....what should I do?

- Contact the police department immediately if you are being threatened or harassed.
- Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250.

Can I get a protective order or a restraining order against the defendant?

- If you are the victim of family violence or sexual assault, you may qualify for a protective order. A protective order is a civil order that helps stop violent and harassing behavior and helps protect a victim and possibly other family members from an abuser.
- Contact the Family Criminal Law Division at 713-274-0212 for more information on protective orders.

What is a Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection (also known as an Emergency Protective Order)?

- A Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection (MOEP) is a protective order that is in effect for between 31-61 days, or between 61-91 days if the abuser was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon.
- The court can issue this order upon the request of the victim, the victim's guardian, a police officer, the prosecutor, or the presiding judge.
- Contact your Victim Assistance Coordinator at 713-274-0250 for more information on a MOEP.

How do I get a Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection removed?

- Only the judge can remove a Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection.