

TARRANT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S



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ANNUAL REPORT
DA PHIL SORRELLS

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A MESSAGE FROM DA PHIL SORRELLS



2024 WAS A BUSY YEAR.

We prosecuted tough cases, put criminals behind bars, and worked hard to find justice for all.

Three men convicted of capital murder were sentenced to the death penalty, the first death penalties given in Tarrant County since 2019. As terrible as these crimes and criminals are, it is never an easy decision to seek the death penalty. But when it is justified, we will seek the ultimate punishment.

Another 24 defendants were sentenced to life in prison, convicted of crimes ranging from capital murder to the continuous sexual assault of a child.

Here's a look at some of our many accomplishments in 2024. We:

- Took 322 cases to trial.
- Disposed of 57,212 cases, including 184 murders or capital murders.
- Handled 2,667 public information requests.
- Oversaw 428 cases where protective orders were granted.
- Reduced the number of pending cases to 31,344. The backlog of cases skyrocketed after Covid hit in March 2020. At the time, there were 29,614 pending cases. That grew to an all-time high of 48,106 in August 2021. When I took office in January 2023, there were 38,625 pending cases.

We are following through with our mission, our commitment, to keep the county safe.

I am proud to work with so many talented and dedicated attorneys, investigators, and staff.

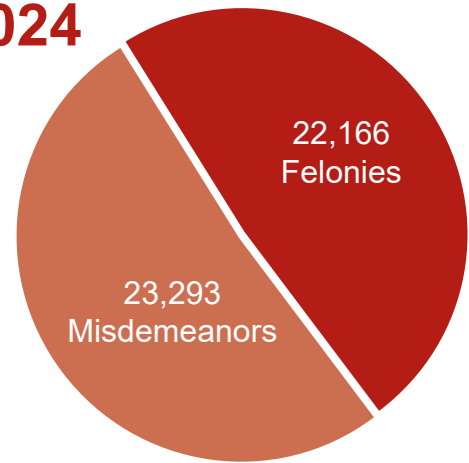
We will never stop fighting for justice.

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

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Cases Filed in 2024

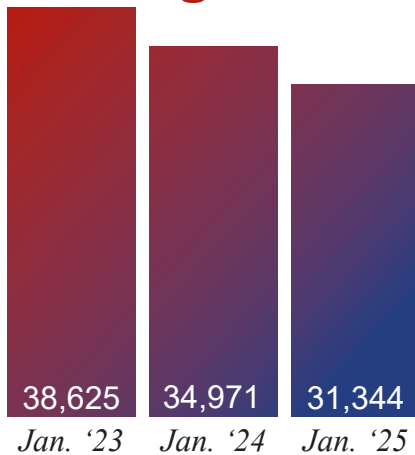
There were a total of **45,459** cases filed in 2024.



\$2.6 million

collected from patients who owed money to JPS Health Network.

Pending Cases

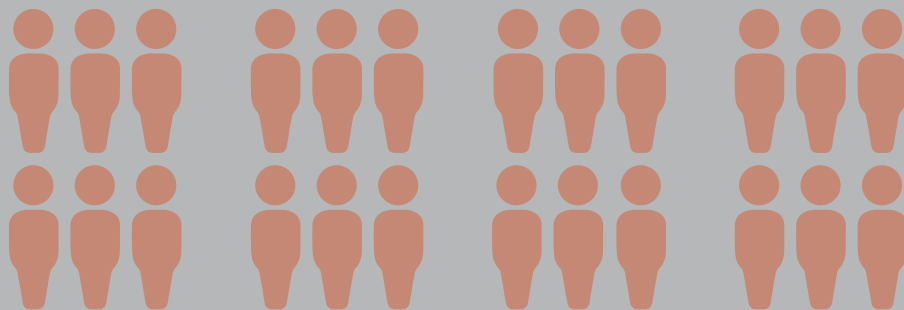


Pending Cases are down 18.8% from January 2023



24
Defendants

Life in prison



3

Death Penalty

Defendants

TOP 5 CRIMES OF 2024

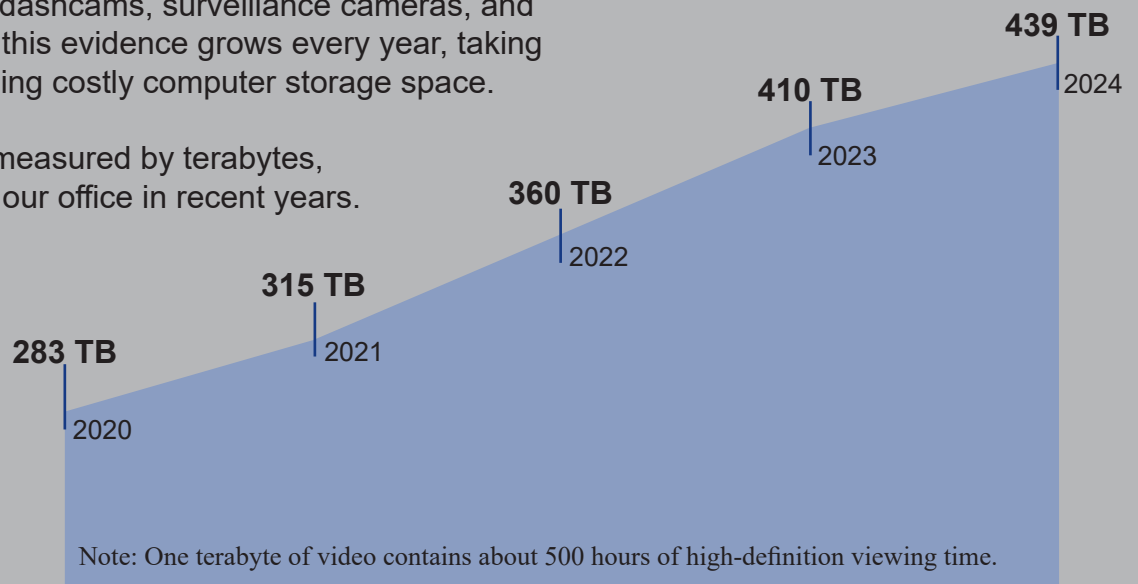
#1	Possession and/or delivery of controlled substances	6,391
#2	Offenses involving Family Violence	5,329
#3	DWI	5,115
#4	Theft of property/services under \$2,500	4,156
#5	Evading/resisting arrest	2,700



DIGITAL EVIDENCE

Our prosecutors constantly review Digital Media Evidence, which includes emails, text messages, social media posts, and video from police bodycams and dashcams, surveillance cameras, and cellphones. The amount of this evidence grows every year, taking more time to review and using costly computer storage space.

Here's a look at the DME, measured by terabytes, that has been submitted to our office in recent years.



STAND WITH SURVIVORS

The problem of sexual assaults and child abuse is overwhelming - locally, statewide, and across the country.

Our office set out in 2024 to draw attention to how frequently these crimes occur.

In April, we launched a new campaign, Stand With Survivors, to draw attention to April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention month.

Assistant DA Kim D'Avignon worked with partner agencies – The Women's Center, Project Beloved, JPS, Phoenix, and TCU – to change the conversation about sexual abuse in Tarrant County.

The goals: spotlight partner agencies, provide resources to victims, and ensure that the community realizes that the DA's Office is committed to prosecuting sexual violence crimes.

“As someone who has done this work for over 20 years in Tarrant County, I am proud to say we have come a long way in how we treat cases involving sexual assault,” D'Avignon said. “I have watched so many brave women and men confront in court the person who attacked them. It is often a very lonely journey for a victim of sexual abuse to come forward and prosecute.”

“Sadly, I have seen time and again victims who had little or no support with them in court,” she said. “That is why we must stand with them on this journey and let them know they are not alone – the citizens of Tarrant County will stand in support of them.”

We took dozens of photos of partners and DA teams with our Stand With Survivors sign and displayed them on social media to spread the word.





Also in April, nearly 100 DA employees and family members signed up to participate in the 27th annual Victory Over Violence walk/run to show support for The Women’s Center’s anti-violence initiatives.

Our team’s name: State’s Ready. (Because we always are).

The walk raised money for The Women’s Center initiatives, such as trauma training, counseling, community awareness, and a 24-hour crisis hotline.

We are pleased to champion The Women’s Center, a vital community partner that helps men, women, and children overcome the trauma of assault and violence.

THE DA’S OFFICE WILL ALWAYS STAND WITH SURVIVORS.



LEAVE OUR KIDS ALONE

DON'T MESS WITH CHILDREN.

If you do, we will prosecute you.

We've proven that day after day, year after year.

Protecting kids – and seeking justice for them – is a priority for this office, especially when a child has been sexually assaulted.

We know we must shield many children from their fathers, stepfathers, uncles, or father-figures – some of the people they trust the most – because, in some cases, those are the very people who sexually assault the youngest, most vulnerable members of their families.

In some cases, the assault lasts for years.

In 2024, Tarrant juries sentenced 12 of these child molesters to life in prison. Many victims were younger than 10.

Beyond those cases, nearly two dozen other pedophiles were sentenced in Tarrant County to a total of more than 1,150 years in prison.

We will keep prosecuting these cases.

We fight for justice. We fight for victims.

This must stop.



END OF LEGAL ARGUMENTS



Zackey Rahimi

ZACKEY RAHIMI IS no longer in the spotlight.

This Arlington man was the focus of nationwide attention after he committed multiple violent gun crimes in Tarrant County while he was under a protective order for domestic violence, which prevented him from legally possessing firearms.

In September 2021, Rahimi pled guilty to violating federal law for possessing firearms despite the domestic violence protective order. He was sentenced to six years in prison. But on his appeal, he claimed he had a right to keep his guns.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed, overturning his conviction, and sent his case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Assistant DA Fredericka Sargent authored our office's amicus brief that defended the restriction on gun possession for domestic violence offenders.

On June 21, 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ended the legal fight.

Justices ruled that Rahimi was wrong and domestic violence offenders with protective orders granted against them do not have the right to possess firearms.

A few months later, on October 18, 2024, Rahimi pled guilty to nearly a dozen Tarrant County cases – felony and misdemeanor charges ranging from violation of a protective order to aggravated assault with a deadly weapon – and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The 15-year sentence starts after Rahimi's federal sentence is completed because the Fifth Circuit ruled that Rahimi's federal and state sentences will run consecutively.

When he gets out of prison, Rahimi has vowed to stay away from firearms, according to a 2023 five-page, handwritten letter in his criminal records file.

"I would like to say I apologize for all the trouble I've put all of you through and for all my actions," he wrote.

Deep in the letter, Rahimi promised "to stay away from all firearms & weapons."



Assistant DA's Fredericka Sargent, Kim D'Avignon, and Emily Kirby traveled to Washington, D.C., to watch Supreme Court arguments in this case in 2023.

NOT ON MY WATCH

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAPPENS more often than you know.

Your neighbor, your co-worker, your childhood friend – any of them could be a victim.

In fact, one in three Texans will fall victim to domestic violence at some point in their life. That violence could be physical, emotional, or sexual.

In Tarrant County alone, family violence is the second most committed crime, with more than 5,300 filed cases in 2024.

We prosecute these cases, but we also are trying to lessen the number of cases that come to us.

Our office began an educational campaign in October, during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, to draw attention to the pervasiveness of this brutality.

“Domestic or family violence will not be tolerated here – not on my watch,” DA Sorrells said.

We are trying to spread the message that we will prosecute these cases and people will be held accountable if they commit domestic violence.

We took photos, and made videos, of people holding our Not On My Watch signs and shared those images on social media.





“DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED HERE...”

Among those featured: Tarrant County Judge Tim O’Hare, Tarrant County Sheriff Bill Waybourn, SafeHaven CEO Kathryn Jacob, Fort Worth Mayor Mattie Parker, employees with The Women’s Center and JPS, and countless prosecutors, investigators, and staff in our office.

We are asking citizens in Tarrant County to stand with us and do everything you can to reduce family or domestic violence.

“This is a problem we can, and will, eliminate,” Sorrells said. “We must work together.”



To report suspected Intimate Partner Violence, call your local police department or sheriff’s office. If you are a victim of domestic violence, contact SafeHaven’s 24-hour hotline at 1-877-701-7233.

WATCHING OUT FOR YOU

THE GOAL OF this office is to keep our community safe.

That generally occurs when we prosecute criminals in the courtroom.

However, at least twice in 2024, DA employees went above and beyond, helping save lives outside of the courtroom.

First, early in the year, Cecilia “Cece” Jones, one of our victim assistant coordinators, saw a 1-year-old getting upset.

The little girl was crying and stuffing powdered doughnuts into her mouth. Suddenly, she started to choke.

Jones patted the girl on her back and helped pull chunks of doughnuts out of the girl’s mouth. Soon, the girl caught her breath and began to breathe normally. Jones gave her some water and the girl’s brother helped her calm down. Jones cut the rest of the doughnuts into small pieces; the girl’s mother soon returned.



Cecilia “Cece” Jones

Later in the year, Assistant DA Tyler Coleman was looking out the window on the 4th floor of the Tim Curry Criminal Justice Center one day and saw something odd.

On the rooftop of the parking lot across the street, the driver’s door on a vehicle was open and a man appeared to be slumped backwards in the vehicle.

Coleman – along with Legal Secretary Samantha Ramirez and Assistant DAs Ken Cutrer and Jess Gambrell – realized a man had passed out in the vehicle. They used binoculars and a cell phone camera to zoom in and see the man. He was sweating and they believed he was having convulsions.

They told Investigator Lee Blaisdell about the man; Blaisdell used his police radio to contact the Tarrant County Sheriff’s Office Judicial Dispatch. There, Dispatch Officer Colleen Giles sent Deputies Robert Gallardo and Humberto Orozco to the secluded rooftop.

Blaisdell directed the deputies to the car and they believed the man likely had overdosed. The deputies gave him Narcan, which is used to treat drug overdoses in an emergency, and the man regained consciousness after a few moments. He told deputies that he had taken an unknown substance.

“I’m very proud of my staff,” DA Sorrells said. “The right people were in the right places at the right times.”



Samantha Ramirez, Tyler Coleman, Ken Cutrer, Lee Blaisdell, Jess Gambrell.

FIGHTING THE DRUG WAR

FENTANYL IS THE most urgent drug threat in the country.

Just two milligrams of the deadly, synthetic opioid – the equivalent of a few grains of table salt – can be lethal.

That's why it's so important for Tarrant County to make headway in prosecuting those who make or deal fentanyl that causes death.

In October, Kaeden Farish, a 19-year-old Azle man, pled guilty to murder and was sentenced to 19 years in prison. On January 20, 2024, he sold fentanyl-laced pills to a 17-year-old who overdosed and died.

"This is a parent's worst nightmare," DA Sorrells said.

Farish's conviction was the first in Tarrant County under the new Texas law allowing prosecutors to charge individuals with murder if they make or deal fentanyl that causes death.

"We will continue to go after those who seek to profit from this deadly drug," Sorrells said. "If you make it, or deal it to someone who dies, we will charge you with murder."

Statewide data shows a nearly 20 percent

drop in fentanyl-related poisoning deaths over the past year, but there is still much to be done.

Fentanyl is cheaper to manufacture than other opioids, which is why some dealers substitute it for other substances.

"This is a scourge in our whole state that we are trying to eradicate," Sorrells said.

In 2021, there were 1,648 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in Texas. By 2022, that number was up to 2,197 and by 2023, that number was 2,306.

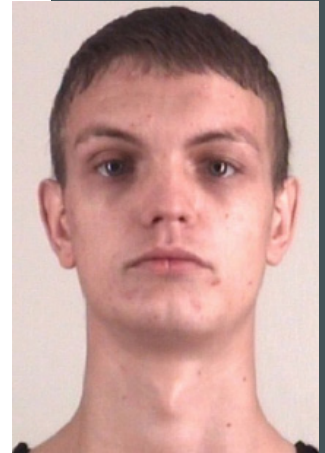
By late 2024, that number was down to 1,060, according to data from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Near the end of 2024, there were 139 overdose deaths in Tarrant County; 57 of those deaths were related to fentanyl, data from the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office shows.

In 2023, Sorrells created a new unit to focus on cases that involve narcotics – fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, and more.

The Narcotics Unit prosecuted more than a dozen cases in 2024 and defendants in those cases were sentenced to a total of more than 600 years in prison. The unit adjudicated 695 cases in 2024 and has nearly 500 active cases. Another nearly 100 cases are pending indictment.

"We are trying to stop these drug dealers from poisoning our kids," Sorrells said.



Kaeden Farish



STRANGULATION WAS HIS “CALLING CARD”



Paige Terrell Lawyer

PAIGE TERRELL LAWYER, 45, is on Death Row.

A Tarrant County jury sent him there in April 2024, after convicting him of capital murder in the deaths of his former girlfriend and her daughter, O’Tishae Womack, 30, and Ka’Myria Womack, 10.

Assistant DAs Lloyd Whelchel and Dale Smith prosecuted this case.

On April 5, 2018, O’Tishae and her sister, Lashundra, went for a walk and saw Lawyer several times. Lawyer and O’Tishae had been in a relationship marked by domestic violence. Lawyer had strangled and choked O’Tishae many times.

The next day, O’Tishae didn’t show up for her morning walk with her sister and she didn’t answer phone calls, texts, or knocks on the door at her home.

Eventually, Lashundra got a key to her sister’s east Fort Worth apartment and went inside.

She found the bodies of O’Tishae and Ka’Myria.

Both had been strangled. Ka’Myria also had been viciously raped.

“He brutally, with no justification, took the lives of two people,” Whelchel told the jury.

Lawyer’s DNA was found on the knot in the bag around O’Tishae’s head, under O’Tishae’s fingernails, on Ka’Myria’s shorts, inside Ka’Myria’s underwear, on a bleach bucket, and on a Lysol can. His fingerprint, in Ka’Myria’s blood, was found on a mop.

“Two lives were extinguished that day,” Smith said. “Both died as a result of strangulation, the defendant’s calling card.”

The jury deliberated for around seven hours, spread out over two days, before giving Lawyer the death penalty instead of life in prison without parole.

“He is going to be a future danger,” Whelchel told the jury. “You know that.”

DA Investigator Caleb Blank and Victim Coordinator Cecilia Jones also worked on this case.

“LURED TO THEIR DEATH”

THE CDC 3 courtroom was crowded, but silent, late in the afternoon on December 4, 2024.

Those inside waited to learn whether Jason Alan Thornburg – who murdered three people, cut up their bodies, and set their remains on fire in 2021 – would be sentenced to life in prison or death.

A few small gasps were heard when it was announced that the Tarrant County jury that found Thornburg, 44, guilty of capital murder also sentenced him to death. Family members of the victims clutched photos of their lost loved ones and wiped away tears.

“I hope you receive forgiveness in Heaven,” a relative of one victim told Thornburg. “I don’t think I can do it.”

Assistant DAs Kim D’Avignon, Emily Dixon, and Amy Allin prosecuted this case.

During the weeks-long trial, Thornburg indicated he took direction from the Bible.

“He knows scripture well. It’s his weapon of choice. He uses it to get vulnerable people to lower their guard,” Allin told the jury. “He will be the friend who gives you a place to sleep, right before he cuts your throat.”

In a September 2021 video, Thornburg said he met his victims at a Euless motel. He determined that David Lueras, Maricruz Mathis, and Lauren Phillips – all at separate times – needed to be sacrificed for religious reasons.



Jason Alan Thornburg

Over seven days, Thornburg brought each of them, separately, into a room he was renting at the Mid City Inn in Euless.

“They were all lured to their death in that hotel room,” Dixon said.

There he killed them, cut their bodies into pieces in the bathtub, then put their body parts into trash bags and eventually into storage tubs. He slit the throats of Lueras and Mathis. He strangled Phillips and later sexually assaulted her corpse. He ate some of Lueras’ heart and cut off his penis.

“What he did was methodical and sadistic,” D’Avignon said. “Hurting people is something he likes to do.”

Thornburg took all the body parts early September 22, 2021, to a dumpster on Bonnie Drive in Fort Worth. Once the remains were in the dumpster, he set them on fire and left.

Later that morning, firefighters responded to a dumpster fire and found dismembered human remains burning. They extinguished the fire; police tracked the bodies to Jason Thornburg.

DA Investigators Caleb Blank and Scott Giovannelli, along with former DA Investigator Pauline Fitzgerald and Victim Advocates Elizabeth Garcia and Allison Bowen, worked on this case.

Thornburg told police he also killed his roommate Mark Jewell in 2021 and his girlfriend Tanya Begay in Arizona in 2017.

**“HE WILL BE THE FRIEND
WHO GIVES YOU A PLACE
TO SLEEP, RIGHT BEFORE HE
CUTS YOUR THROAT.”**

“BURN IN THE FLAMES OF HELL”

AFTER MORE THAN four years, Hussein Ali can finally find some peace.

In March 2020, his father – Anwar Ali – was robbed, shot, and killed at the convenience store he owned in an unincorporated area of Tarrant County.

Years later, on November 20, 2024, Hussein Ali saw the man who executed his father convicted of capital murder by a jury and sentenced to the death penalty.

“This man killed my father,” Hussein Ali yelled in the courtroom, as he pointed at Christopher Karon Turner, 48. “I pray he burns in the flames of hell.”

He told the full courtroom that his father did so much for his family and his death was “an unnecessary murder.”

Early in the morning on March 27, 2020, Anwar Ali opened his store and held the door open for Turner, who came in wearing a surgical mask and a glove.

Turner quickly pointed a gun at Ali’s back, forcing him to walk through the store. Ali did everything Turner demanded, including opening the cash register to give him money. Turner forced Ali to the bathroom and onto his knees and executed him.

Seconds later, Turner fled the store in Ali’s Toyota minivan with an undisclosed amount of cash and Ali’s wallet. In the van, he found more than \$50,000 in a black bag.

About an hour later, Ali was discovered dead in the bathroom of the convenience store, shot in the neck.

Ali “was a good person,” said Assistant DA Allenna Bangs, who prosecuted the case against Turner with Assistant DA Charles

Boulware. “At the age of 62, he was wiped away in an instant ... for greed, for absolute lack of respect for human life.”

In the days after Ali’s murder, Turner bought cars, jewelry, drugs, clothes, and more. He and others used cash and a credit card that belonged to Ali.

Turner fled to Colorado. There, U.S. Marshals arrested him. On his body they found a firearm that was determined to be the murder weapon.

“From Day One, from the arrest in Colorado, this defendant has been desperately trying to avoid responsibility,” Boulware said. “He tried to blame it on several other people.”

“He knows exactly what he did.”

DA Investigator Benjamin Lopez and former DA Investigator Jim Rizy, along with Victim Advocate Cecilia Jones, also worked on this case.



Christopher Karon Turner

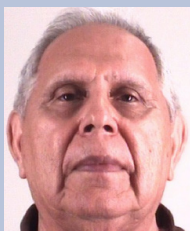
GETTING LIFE

DA SORRELLS CONTINUED cracking down on crime, seeking lengthy sentences for those who committed heinous crimes. Here's a look at the 24 people sentenced to life in prison in 2024.



RONNIE JACKSON, 41

Jackson was found guilty of aggravated assault of a peace officer with a deadly weapon in a 2020 attack against a Fort Worth police officer. On June 13, 2020, he was evading police in a stolen vehicle on Interstate 820. As he neared the Camp Bowie West Boulevard exit, an officer stood on the side of the road, throwing out spike strips to slow him down. Jackson drove toward the officer, hitting him, and running over him. He fled the scene. The officer was taken to the hospital and underwent immediate surgery for extensive, life-threatening injuries. Prosecutors Lisa Callaghan, D.J. Estes. Investigator Ben Lopez. Victim Coordinator Laura Medina. January 29, 2024.



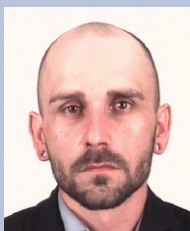
JOSE VALLE FERNANDEZ, 74

Valle Fernandez was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. Over the course of five years, Fernandez sexually abused four of his grandchildren, who were between the ages of 5 and 9. Prosecutors Courtney Mowdy, Juan Sandoval. Investigator Tiffany Johnson. Victim Coordinator Imelda Lopez. February 16, 2024.



JEFFERY WHEAT, 51

Wheat pled guilty to four sexual assaults he committed in North Texas – including one in Tarrant County – between 2003 and 2011. The serial rapist was sentenced to life in prison during a multi-county disposition. The Tarrant County case involved a 2003 sexual assault; the victim was in her home when a man broke in during the middle of the night and tried to assault her. He was nude except for socks on his hands and feet and a white shirt over his face. Forensic Genetic Genealogy linked this case to three others in North Texas. Prosecutor Stephanie Simpson. Investigator Chris LaChance. Victim Coordinator Laura Medina. February 27, 2024.



NATHAN GREER, 32

Greer was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. He sexually abused his girlfriend's daughter for several years, starting when she was five years old. Prosecutors Steven Elliott, Ashton Moore. Investigator Kevin Hilliard. Victim Coordinator Carma Anderson. March 1, 2024.



MAURICE KELSO SMITH, 32

Smith was found guilty of capital murder for killing Darionne Burley, his girlfriend who was pregnant with twins. On June 29, 2020, he shot Burley in the back of the head, causing her immediate death and the deaths of the babies. Smith drove to Mansfield where he robbed a woman at gunpoint of her vehicle. He left his car at the scene of the robbery, where police discovered Burley in a bloody crime scene. Prosecutors Allenna Bangs, Kate Hinojosa. Investigator Caleb Blank. Victim Coordinator Clara Salvatierra. March 4, 2024.



TOMMY WILLIAMS, 65

Williams was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. After the verdict, the court heard statements from both of his victims about the impact this abuse has had on their lives. Prosecutors Idris Akinpelu, Hilary Wright. Investigator James Desmarais. Victim Coordinator Elizabeth Garcia. March 7, 2024.



BENEDICTO CISNEROS MARTINEZ, 38

Cisneros Martinez was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. On May 10, 2021, a relative of Cisneros Martinez outcried to Arlington Police that Cisneros Martinez had sexually assaulted her multiple times since she was seven years old. The victim told police that on at least one occasion he also gave her drugs before the sexual assault took place. Prosecutors Matthew Hinojosa, Colin Duffy. Investigator Brian Johnson. Victim Coordinator Angela Stevens. April 19, 2024.



LORENZO CHACON GARCIA, 52

Garcia was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault of a child. On June 3, 2018, a 16-year-old relative of Garcia's girlfriend reported that Garcia sexually assaulted her the night before. Garcia picked her up from a dance and gave her alcohol. Just before arriving at her house, he began rubbing her legs and feet in the car and then drove a short distance from her home where he violently sexually assaulted her. Prosecutors Deanna Franzen, Megan Bradshaw. Investigator Brent Ezelle. Victim Coordinator Imelda Lopez. April 25, 2024.



ISRAEL SANTIAGO, 51

Santiago was found guilty of sexual assault of a child. In July of 2020, just three months after being paroled for homicide, Santiago sexually assaulted a 15-year-old family member. Witnesses later discovered the offense had been recorded on a home camera and turned it over to police. The jury heard evidence that Santiago had previously been convicted of several family violence assaults, driving while intoxicated, and murdering his wife in front of their children. Prosecutors Amy Allin, Allenna Bangs. Investigator Josh Neiswender. Victim Coordinator Imelda Lopez. July 11, 2024.



PAUL GOOD, 51

Good was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault of a child. In 2001, Good sexually assaulted a 7-year-old family member as punishment for receiving a bad conduct mark at school. The jury heard from additional victims that Good also sexually abused when they were children. Prosecutors Megan Bradshaw, Matthew Jackson. Investigator Matt Hardy. Victim Coordinator Imelda Lopez. July 11, 2024.



BRIAN RICKER, 42

Ricker was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. Ricker sexually abused a young family member over the course of six years. Prosecutors Steven Elliott, Cassidy Durfee. Investigator Kevin Hilliard. Victim Coordinator Carma Anderson. July 11, 2024.



JUAN GONZALEZ QUILES, 43

Gonzalez Quiles was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. He sexually assaulted a female family member from the time she was in the first grade through when she was in the fourth grade. The young girl made an outcry about the sexual assault in August 2022 to a psychologist she was seeing for social anxiety. Prosecutors Sydney Brock, Courtney Mowdy. Investigator Brian Johnson. Victim Coordinator Angela Stevens. July 12, 2024.



MICHAEL DILLON, 43

Dillon was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. Dillon sexually abused a young female relative for several years, starting when she was two years old. CPS was made aware of the abuse and reported it to police on February 14, 2023. Prosecutors Marina Thomas, Courtney Mowdy. Investigator Brent Ezelle. Victim Coordinator Laura Medina. July 17, 2024.



JACOBY McCLOUD, 24

McCloud pled guilty to the murder of his roommates – Darion Deen, 26, and Shelby Amerson, 22. On January 2, 2022, McCloud shot and killed one roommate who was unarmed and then stabbed another roommate to death. Prosecutors Stuart Neal, Danielle Bonanno. Investigators Brian Johnson, Zachary Long. Victim Coordinator Angela Stevens. July 26, 2024.



DEBRA MAE CARTER, 65

Carter was found guilty for the role she played in William Neil “Doc” Gallagher’s Christian Ponzi scheme that bilked senior citizens out of millions of dollars. Gallagher, who was sentenced in 2021 to three life sentences in prison, brought in the money. Carter, Gallagher’s mistress, made sure the money was not recovered by the victims. The two planned to retire to a huge ranch together. Prosecutors Lori Varnell, Nathan Martin, Anastasia Frane. Investigators Kyle Truly, Dara Couch. Victim Coordinator Carrie Farley. July 30, 2024.



THOMAS BOYKIN, 53

Boykin pled guilty to aggravated assault with a deadly weapon causing serious bodily injury. On May 16, 2023, Boykin shot his 13-year-old son while he was asleep and his 21-year-old stepdaughter as she begged him not to shoot her. He also assaulted his wife. Both his son, with three gunshot wounds, and stepdaughter, with two gunshot wounds, survived after they were taken into surgery with life-threatening injuries. Prosecutors Allenna Bangs, Chris DeWitt. Investigator Briant Thomas. Victim Coordinator Angela Stevens. August 9, 2024.



DAVID WILKINSON, 49

Wilkinson was found guilty of the continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. For more than a year, he sexually assaulted a nine-year-old family member. The abuse occurred repeatedly until she outcried to a family member. Evidence of his crime was found in the defendant’s bedroom during a search warrant of his home. Prosecutors Ashton Moore, Steven Elliott. Investigator Kevin Hilliard. Victim Coordinator Carma Anderson. August 22, 2024.



MICHAEL JEROD WILLIAMS, 57

Williams was found guilty of murder. Around 1:30 a.m. on April 25, 2021, Williams approached Harold Yazzie, 62, who was sitting in his truck at a Fort Worth apartment complex. Williams stole Yazzie’s cell phone and wallet. Yazzie was shot in the leg when Yazzie attempted to defend himself and later died at the hospital from his injuries. Prosecutors Peter Giesecking, Ashton Moore. Investigator Kevin Hilliard. Victim Coordinator Carma Anderson. September 16, 2024.



KENDRICK REAGOR, 41

Reagor was found guilty of burglary of a habitation with the intent to commit sexual assault. On June 28, 2023, Reagor forced his way into a woman’s apartment and pointed a gun at her with the intent to sexually assault her. Reagor previously had been convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a child and was on parole at the time. Prosecutors Idris Akinpelu, Hilary Wright. Investigator Darran Gabbert. Victim Coordinator Angela Stevens. September 27, 2024.



CARLUS QUALLS, 52

Qualls pled guilty to murder. On April 30, 2021, Qualls, a habitual offender, shot Oscar Lavant Payton in the back of the head. He dumped his body by the side of the road in Fort Worth. Prosecutors Steven Elliott, Peter Giesecking. Investigator Kevin Hilliard. Victim Coordinator Carma Anderson. October 23, 2024.



LEROY WHITE, 54

White was found guilty of the unlicensed possession of a firearm by a felon. On July 29, 2022, while working as security at an Arlington bar, White was involved in an altercation in which he fired a weapon at a patron. White was on bond for robbery out of the Dallas County Jail and previously had been convicted of murder. Prosecutors Jeff Stewart, Madeline Jones. Investigators Tim Pinckney, Jose Fonseca. October 24, 2024.



RYAN WILLRICH, 32

Willrich was found guilty of murder. On May 31, 2020, Willrich went with his girlfriend to an East Lancaster fast food restaurant to meet his girlfriend's ex, Sean Woodberry, and let him take the child he shared with her. As Woodbury, 27, approached the car, Willrich shot and killed him. The child was still in the backseat of the car. Prosecutors Lloyd Whelchel, Rose Anna Salinas. Investigator Jose Fonseca. Victim Coordinator Cecilia Jones. November 14, 2024.



ESTEBAN HERNANDEZ, 22

Hernandez was found guilty of manufacturing and delivering between four and 200 grams of a controlled substance. On May 24, 2024, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office Warrants Division officers were notified that Hernandez had three outstanding felony warrants. Hernandez also was threatening to cut off his GPS ankle monitor. Working with Tarrant County Pre-Trial GPS Officers, deputies tracked his location and found marijuana, cocaine, and drug paraphernalia in his car. The jury learned Hernandez has multiple pending felony cases against him, including an aggravated sexual assault of a child under the age of 14. Prosecutors Michael Ferry, Ashlea Deener. Investigators Sean Wheatley, Lee Blaisdell. Victim Coordinator Laura Medina. November 20, 2024.



MARION TAITE JR., 59

Taite was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14. Taite sexually abused a female family member multiple times when she was 12 years old. He told her that, in exchange for sexual favors, he would take care of her and her family. The jury heard that Taite sexually abused two other children. Prosecutors D.J. Estes, Ross Vandekop. Investigator Brad Gantt. Victim Coordinator Candice Burnett. December 5, 2024.

IN OUR COMMUNITY



DA Sorrells spoke to various media outlets in 2024. In this interview with a national TV news crew, he talked about the Narcotics Unit he created in 2023 and explained that the prosecution of narcotics cases, including those involving fentanyl, is a priority for this office.

A group of felony prosecutors attended the Let's Play Bingo! Ladies Luncheon fundraiser for Alliance For Children. The alliance is a vital partner of our office.



First Assistant DA Robb Catalano welcomed attendees to our Spring Citizen Prosecutor Academy. Participants learned over the course of 11 weeks about the criminal justice system and how DA Sorrells and his team are fighting to keep our community safe.



Assistant DAs Marina Thomas and Megan Bradshaw helped Alliance For Children fill backpacks for children going back to school.



IN OUR COMMUNITY



Groups of DA employees gathered April 8 in different areas outside the Tim Curry Criminal Justice Center to see the total solar eclipse.



DA Sorrells spoke at the Tarrant County Law Enforcement Memorial Ceremony, honoring officers who made the ultimate sacrifice upholding laws and protecting our community.

Assistant DAs Chase Payne and Kim D'Avignon posed for a photo with Katharine Esser, with The Women's Center.



IN OUR COMMUNITY



Tarrant County officials and DA leaders gathered to participate in a National Crime Victims' Rights Week event. They praised crime victims for being brave enough to navigate their way through the criminal justice system and presented certificates of appreciation to community partners. A wreath was displayed at the event.



Roy Brooks, Phil Sorrells, Alisa Simmons, Gary Fickes, Allison Bowen, Tim O'Hare, Robb Catalano



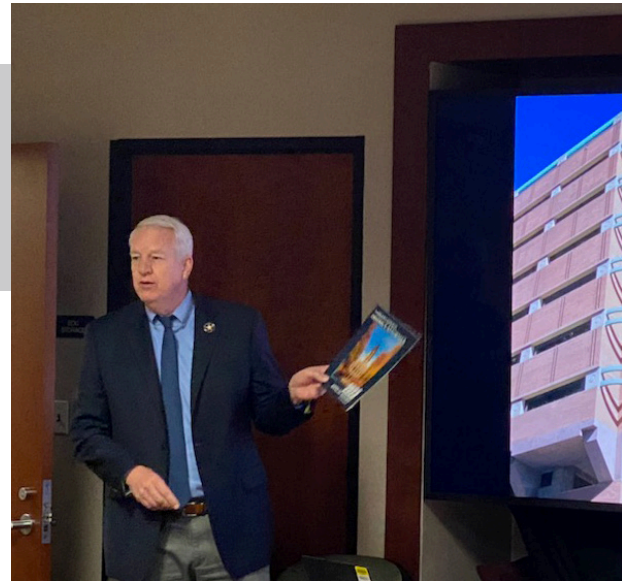
Mental health cases have significantly increased in the criminal justice system, Assistant DA Nelda Cacciotti, the chief of our Mental Health Unit, and other panel members told Texas A&M students and legal practitioners during a Mental Health Criminal Panel.

Assistant DA Lori Varnell welcomed attendees from across the country to a meeting for the Skimming Working Group of the International Fraud Investigators at the Fort Worth Stockyards.



IN OUR COMMUNITY

DA Sorrells spoke to the Colleyville Police Academy, sharing information about how our office works.



Our Elder Financial Fraud team – Investigator Dara Couch, Assistant DA Nathan Martin, and Investigator Kyle Truly – represented our office at the Empowering Seniors Expo, teaching seniors how to avoid being scammed.



First Assistant DA Robb Catalano was part of a conversation about how to reduce crime rates in our community. He and law enforcement officers participated in a roundtable discussion, collaborating with community leaders.

ACCOLADES



Assistant DA Tori Ford Oblon gained board certification in criminal appellate law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Less than 7% of attorneys in Texas are board certified.

Assistant DA Paul Nguyen was appointed to serve as the chair of the Dallas Asian American Bar Association Mentorship Committee for 2024.



Assistant DA Katie Owens, chief of the Gang Unit, was honored as Criminal Prosecutor of the Year by the Texas Gang Investigators Association. The nominating form for this honor described her as tenacious in the courtroom.

ACCOLADES

DA Investigator Don Pilcher was named the new Chief Investigator for this office. Pilcher, who has worked in this office since 2012, was chosen for this position in June.



Tarrant County Bar Association honors: Assistant DA Ann Diamond, who celebrated 40 years in our office in 2024, received the President's Award; Assistant DA Marvinna Robinson, chief of our Protective Order Unit, was installed as president-elect; and First Assistant DA Robb Catalano was installed as a director. DA Sorrells celebrated all three of the honorees.

Assistant DAs Dale Smith and Allenna Bangs won the C. Chris Marshall Award from the Texas District & County Attorneys Association. The award recognizes people who have made significant contributions to TDCAA's training efforts, as both Bangs and Smith have.



ACCOLADES

Assistant DA Fredericka Sargent was named Prosecutor of the Year by the TDCAA. She leads the charge in our office on firearms-related cases and authored our amicus brief that was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court defending a restriction on gun possession for domestic violence offenders.



Assistant DA Michael Ferry and DA Investigator Kevin Brown were honored with the U.S. Attorney's Award of Excellence for their work on the 2019 investigation into the overdose death of Los Angeles Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs. DA Sorrells and First Assistant DA Robb Catalano celebrated the honorees.

William Knight won the general election for Criminal District Court No. 2. Knight, a Fort Worth native, worked as a prosecutor at the DA's Office for nearly a decade.



ACCOLADES

Twelve of our prosecutors were named to the prestigious Top Attorneys in Tarrant County list by Fort Worth Magazine in 2024.



Allenna Bangs



Ashton Moore



Aulstin Gardiner



Jeff Stewart



Jessica Theriot



Kyle Morris



Madeline Jones



Matt Rivers



Norma Bazan



Olivia Stoner



Stephanie Richardson



William Knight

TIM CURRY CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER

CITIZEN PROSECUTOR ACADEMY

Do YOU WANT to learn about the criminal justice system in Tarrant County?

Then come join our office's Citizen Prosecutor Academy. We hold it twice a year – once in the Spring and once in the Fall.

You will learn about every step of prosecution, and you'll get an insider's perspective on how the system works. Assistant District Attorneys and Investigators teach participants. Not only that, but you'll also get to tour the Tarrant County Corrections Center.

Classes meet on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. There's no cost. Our Spring Academy is full, but you can apply for the Fall Academy now.



For more information about the program, call 817-884-1400 or go online to cda.tarrantcounty.com and click on the Community tab. You can apply online to participate.



Editorial

The 2024 Annual Report was written and compiled by Anna Tinsley Williams, communications officer of the Tarrant County DA's Office. To contact her, send an email to atwilliams@tarrantcountytx.gov.

THE TARRANT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



Phil Sorrells

was sworn in as Tarrant County's 15th elected District Attorney on January 1, 2023. He oversees this office, considered the county's largest "law firm," which handles criminal and civil matters.



Robb Catalano

serves as the First Assistant District Attorney, providing overall management of the office and assisting with strategic planning.

Tarrant County is the 14th largest county in the country and the third largest in Texas. There are 41 municipal police departments and 76 law enforcement agencies in Tarrant County. All these agencies file criminal cases with this office.

The Criminal Division

is the largest division in our office. Approximately 200 licensed attorneys in this division take cases to the grand jury as well as to 11 felony and 10 misdemeanor courts. Each year, we handle about 45,000 criminal cases. **Rose Anna Salinas** is the chief of the Criminal Division, assisted by four Deputy Chiefs: **Allenna Bangs, Tim Rodgers, Dale Smith, and Bill Vassar.** **Bruce Beasley** is chief of the Misdemeanor Division; **Susan Pruett** is the deputy chief.

The Civil Division

serves as the general counsel for Tarrant County and its elected and appointed officials, including the Commissioners Court, the sheriff, the tax assessor collector, and the district and county clerks. **Craig Price** is the chief of the Civil Division; **David Hudson** is the deputy chief.

The Investigative Division

is staffed by investigators, certified Texas peace officers, who assist prosecutors by evaluating and helping prepare cases for trial. **Don Pilcher** is chief of this division. **Marvin "Mo" Brown** and **Chris LaChance** are assistant chief investigators.

The Staff Division

is compiled of more than 100 non-lawyer, non-investigator employees who serve as our legal administrative staff. **Jason Peters** is chief of staff.

