

The DOCKET

Phil Sorrells - Tarrant County District Attorney

Summer 2025



A Message from DA Phil Sorrells



Tarrant County juries have handed down some stiff sentences this year.

Of the more than 100 felony offenders we have prosecuted so far this year, 20 were sentenced to life in prison by June 1.

Beyond that, local juries have doled out sentences long enough to keep more than two dozen other defendants in prison for the rest of their lives. Those defendants were convicted of crimes ranging from murder to the sexual assault of children.

Here are some of those cases:

- 99 years for Cletus Ray Malone Jr., 63, convicted of aggravated robbery for holding up a clerk and robbing a North Richland Hills grocery store as well as committing other aggravated robberies.
- 80 years for Joe Lozano, 43, convicted of murdering a man he was arguing with near the swimming pool at a Fort Worth hotel.
- 80 years for William Pearson, 38, convicted of exposing himself to a 16-year-old female neighbor and touching her inappropriately.
- 75 years for Floyd Nunley, 59, convicted of repeatedly sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl.
- 70 years for Ronald Berry, 48, convicted of murdering a friend, shooting him 13 times as the friend was trying to leave Berry's home.
- 60 years for Emmanuel Medina, 39, convicted of sexually assaulting a woman in a closet while strangling her.
- 60 years for Dennis Jones, 43, convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon for attacking a mother and daughter with a metal pipe inside "The Container Store" in Arlington.

We fight for justice every single day.

And we are making a difference.

Speakers on the Road



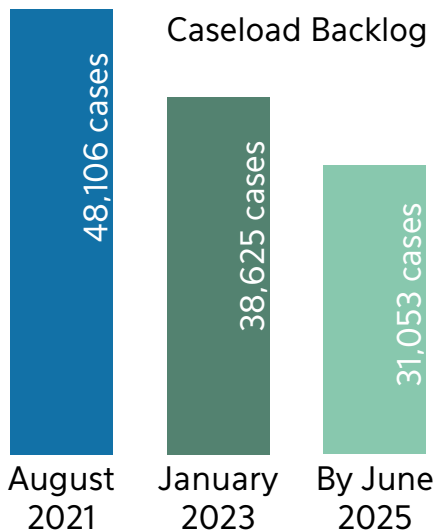
Experts from the DA staff often speak at a variety of events.

Our attorneys, investigators, and staff are highly sought after to speak on topics ranging from cell phone safety for students to protecting seniors from financial fraud.

If you are interested in requesting a speaker from our office for your school, organization, or conference, go online to our website at cda.tarrantcounty.com. Click on Community and fill out the Speakers On The Road request form.

DA Investigator Dara Couch and Assistant DA Nathan Martin have talked to groups about avoiding financial scams, such as those who call telling you to take cash and deposit it into a Bitcoin ATM.

By the Numbers



DA Sorrells and this office continue working to shrink the backlog of cases that grew in the criminal courts under Covid restrictions.

Here's a look at the current caseload.

The backlog was at its highest in August 2021, with 48,106 cases.

In January 2023, 38,625 cases were pending in the Tarrant County criminal courts. By June 2025, that number was down to 31,053.

Fighting Fentanyl

State lawmakers are continuing their war against fentanyl.

First, lawmakers in 2023 created a new law letting prosecutors charge someone with murder if they make or deal fentanyl that causes the death of another.



This year, they followed up with The Fentanyl Child Endangerment Act, a measure they worked on with our office.

This measure, known as House Bill 166, updates the Texas Penal Code to make it a felony to expose children, the elderly, or disabled adults to fentanyl. It does not impact medical use of the drug.

"A special thanks to the Texas Legislature for approving this legislation," DA Sorrells said. "This will give us more tools to protect some of our most vulnerable people."

"This is a scourge in Texas that we are trying to eradicate."

Fentanyl is a deadly synthetic opioid approved by the FDA for pain relief. Since fentanyl is cheaper to manufacture than other opioids, some dealers substitute it for other substances. Just two milligrams of fentanyl, the equivalent of a few grains of table salt, can be lethal.

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

HB 166, already signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott, will go into effect September 1, 2025.



Victory Over Violence

Hope truly does start here.

That's why dozens of DA employees got out of bed early on the morning of April 12 to meet at the Trinity Park Duck Pond and to participate in the annual Victory Over Violence Walk & Run.

This event benefits The Women's Center, where workers tirelessly help survivors of sexual violence. This office strongly believes in and supports the Center's mission.



Each year, the Center helps more than 150,000 victims of sexual assault, child sexual assault, and other violence – women, children, and men – overcome crisis and find hope.

The walk this year, with a theme of Moving Hope Forward, raised money for the Center's initiatives that include counseling, community awareness, and trauma training.

It is an honor to work with the Center as we prosecute those who commit domestic violence.

This year, one of our teammates – Esther Goodwin, our Juvenile Team investigator – even took home second place in the Victory Over Violence Walk & Run!

Our team's name?

State's Ready.

Because we always are.



Stand With Survivors

The facts are clear.

One in every three women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

One in every four girls, and one in every six boys, will be sexually abused before they turn 18.

Every two minutes, someone in America is sexually assaulted.

Sexual assault and child abuse are crimes constantly being reported to police. Trying to highlight how prevalent these assaults are, our office, for the second year in a row, promoted an educational campaign called Stand With Survivors.

We asked elected officials, partner agencies, and people in this office to join in our campaign to change the conversation about sexual abuse in Tarrant County. This office is committed to prosecuting sexual violence and child abuse crimes.

So, we took photos of partners, officials, and DA teams with our Stand With Survivors sign and shared them on social media to spread the word.

Now it's your turn to join us and #StandWithSurvivors.



We've Got Your Back

When a crime occurs, a first-time victim's life turns upside down.

Scared and uncertain, he or she is thrown into an unfamiliar and often confusing criminal justice system.

Don't worry. If that's you, we've got your back.

Our Victim Assistance Coordinators (VACs) work with victims, helping them navigate the system.

They'll be with you in the courtroom. They'll make sure you understand what's happening during the trial. They'll make sure you know your rights and have access to services that can help you.



On April 2, Tarrant County Judge Tim O'Hare presented a proclamation honoring National Crime Victims' Rights Week to our VACs.

A week later, DA Sorrells talked about the importance of the role our victim service professionals play in the criminal justice system at a National Crime Victims' Rights Week event that we held at the Civil Courts building.

"We stand with victims of crime," Sorrells said. "We care. We are advocates for them. We are making sure our victims are heard."

"We are going to be beside them, giving them the courage to stand up and move forward," he said. "And it's not just this one week. It's year-round. They are not alone."

O'Hare, Sheriff Bill Waybourn, and County Commissioner Matt Krause were among those who attended the event, along with police officers, former prosecutors, and victim advocates from across Tarrant County.

Wreaths gifted by Sorrells and this office were displayed at Tarrant County subcourthouses and the Commissioners Court to show our solidarity in the fight to support victims.

The theme to this year's event was "Kinship, Connecting & Healing."



We gave out blue plastic wristbands as a reminder that we always support victims. Each stated the same message we hope to convey to all victims: We've Got Your Back.

Allison Attles Bowen, our Victim Services Director who passed away in late February, was honored at the event.

“I Hope You Burn in Hell When You Get There”



Lamont Cousins

A Tarrant County jury on May 1 sentenced Lamont Cousins, 48, to life in prison without parole for killing three people, leaving one body at a Fort Worth used car dealership and two more in an abandoned building in Palo Pinto County.

Tarrant County Assistant District Attorneys Dale Smith and Lloyd Whelchel represented the State in this case.

On December 14, 2020, Cousins shot and killed three people – 46-year-old Veronica Del Jones, 65-year-old Virginia Lewis, and 55-year-old Clayton Turrentine – over a car deal.

“This case is about the execution of three people,” Whelchel told the jury. “What he did was so terrible, and it caps a lifetime of behavior.”

Family members of the victims gathered in the courtroom and were silent when the life sentence was announced. Then some told Cousins how devastating losing their loved ones has been.

“God says to forgive, but this is unforgiveable,” one woman said. “I hope you burn in hell when you get there.”

Cousins shot and killed Lewis at Bill’s Auto Sales off Benbrook Highway. Police conducting a welfare check found her lying on the floor in a pool of her blood.

Cousins also shot Turrentine, owner of Bill’s Auto Sales, and Jones, a dealership employee, at the dealership. Co-defendant Andrew Vandermeer testified that he tied up the two and drove them, with Cousins in the vehicle giving directions, to an abandoned bait shop in Palo Pinto County.

“They knew this was their last stop because (Cousins) told them: ‘This is the end of the road,’” Smith told the jury.

Cousins took Turrentine into the building and shot him in the back of the head, killing him. He then got Jones from the vehicle and did the same with her. He and Vandermeer left both bodies there and returned to Fort Worth.

“This is not about vengeance,” Smith told the jury. “This is about justice.”

These murders followed a car deal that involved Turrentine purchasing a red Dodge from Cousins and putting it on his lot. Someone bought the vehicle only to learn there was a lien on the car and it was repossessed. Turrentine returned the purchase price of the car to the buyer.

Vandermeer, 36, pled guilty on May 30 to murder and was sentenced to 45 years in prison.

DA Investigator Danny Nutt and Victim Coordinator Elizabeth Garcia also worked on this case.

ADA Dale Smith
featured in the Star Telegram



Getting Life

In addition to Lamont Cousins, eight people between March 10 and June 1 were sentenced to life in prison by Tarrant County juries or judges. Here are those cases.

Mark Anthony Washington, 58



Washington was found guilty of murder. On April 15, 2019, Washington drove from Oklahoma to Arlington to shoot and kill Juriah Fields. Fields, 29, was shot outside his home and died at a hospital. Washington also threatened to take his wife

and Fields to a deserted area and force her to shoot Fields.

Prosecutors: Jeff Stewart, Matthew Jackson.

Investigator: Caleb Blank.

Victim Coordinator: Imelda Lopez.

March 28, 2025.

Clarence Tillis, 35



Tillis was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault of a child. In June 2023, Tillis showed a 6-year-old girl a pornographic video. He then made her do the sexual acts portrayed in the video. Tillis has a previous conviction for

aggravated sexual assault of a child in 2018. That victim was three years old.

Prosecutors: Marina Thomas, Courtney Mowdy.

Investigator: Brent Ezelle.

Victim Coordinator: Candace Burnett.

April 10, 2025.

Jeremy Hargrove, 44



Hargrove was found guilty of two counts of aggravated sexual assault of a child. He was sentenced to two life sentences. In the early morning hours of February 26, 2022, Hargrove provided drugs and alcohol to an

underage child and sexually assaulted her.

Prosecutors: Madeline Jones, Olivia Stoner.

Investigator: Patrick Knotts.

Victim Coordinator: Cecilia Jones.

April 17, 2025.

William Nevilles, 49



Nevilles was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault of a child, aggravated kidnapping, and indecency with a child. He was sentenced to four consecutive life sentences. On December

14, 2023, Nevilles kidnapped an 8-year-old girl who was in the toy aisle at a WalMart in Fort Worth. He took her to three separate locations and sexually assaulted her.

Prosecutors: Steven Elliott, Ashton Moore.

Investigator: Tiffany Johnson.

Victim Coordinator: Cristina Rangel.

May 1, 2025.

Getting Life

Jesse Herrera, 58



Herrera was found guilty of indecency with a child and sexual assault of a child. He was sentenced to two life sentences. Beginning in 2018, Herrera sexual abused an 11-year-old girl who lived in the same home. The abuse lasted three years.

Prosecutors: Deanna Franzen, Kimberly Barragon.

Investigator: Lee Blaisdell.

Victim Coordinator: Carma Anderson.

May 9, 2025.

Aundra Taylor, 20



Taylor was found guilty of murder. Around 2 a.m. April 10, 2023, Taylor was at Joe's Food Mart in southeast Fort Worth. Taylor shot three people, killing two – Marques Parker, 18, and Michael Sansom Jr., 29.

Parker died at the store; Sansom died days later at a hospital.

Prosecutors: Katie Owens, Dani Wojciak.

Investigator: Steve Groppi.

Victim Coordinator: Angela Stevens.

May 13, 2025.

Demarcus Starks, 32



Starks was found guilty of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. On December 27, 2020, Starks was following his ex-girlfriend, who was walking with a 20-year-old coworker. Starks mistakenly believed

the man was her new boyfriend and shot him in the back, permanently paralyzing him from the waist down. Starks went on the run for nearly three years, picking up multiple felony criminal charges during that time.

Prosecutors: Anthony Salinas, Ashlea Deener.

Investigator: Lee Blaisdell.

Victim Coordinator: Laura Medina.

May 14, 2025.

Jesus Terrazas, 59



Terrazas was found guilty of continuous sexual abuse of a child.

In 2020, an 8-year-old girl made an outcry that Terrazas sexually assaulted her multiple times when she visited family in Arlington.

Prosecutors: Sydney Brock, Megan Bradshaw.

Investigator: Tiffany Johnson.

Victim Coordinator: Angela Stevens.

May 16, 2025.

In Our Community

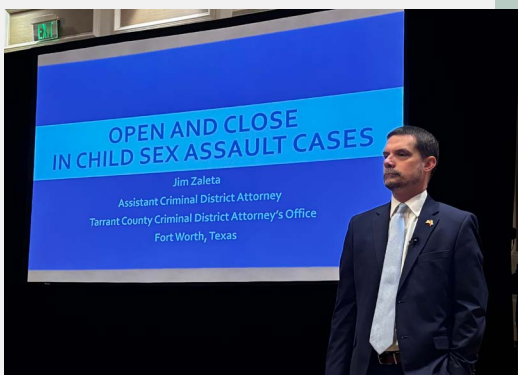
DA Sorrells, along with prosecutors and investigators, met with people and groups throughout Tarrant County, often talking about cases we are prosecuting or explaining how our office works. Here's a look at some recent community outreach by DA staffers.



First Assistant DA Robb Catalano welcomed our Spring 2025 Citizen Prosecutor Academy. DA Sorrells spoke to the academy when they graduated.



Assistant DAs Allenna Bangs, Kim D'Avignon, James Zaleta, Chase Payne, and Emily Kirby all spoke at the Texas District and County Attorneys Association's Prosecuting Domestic Violence & Child Sex Assault Conference in Sugar Land.



In Our Community



Assistant DA Nathan Martin shared tips with a group gathered at the Haltom City Senior Center. Among his useful advice: if someone new appears on your social media, and rushes you to start a friendship or romance, slow down. No matter who it is, never send money to someone you haven't met in person.

Assistant DA Lauren Lawrence testified before the House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee about a bill geared to protect children, the disabled, and the elderly by creating a legal presumption that exposure to fentanyl is dangerous.



Assistant DA Deanna Franzen traveled to Corpus Christi to speak at the Women in Criminal Justice Conference. She said it's crucial for those testifying in a trial, especially experts, to fully document their reports. This was among the information she shared while teaching about effective testimony.

In Our Community

DA Sorrells swore former Assistant DA Amy Allin into office after she was appointed by Governor Greg Abbott to the 297th Judicial District Court in Tarrant County.



Assistant DAs Kyle Morris and Jessica Theriot explained the ins and outs of juvenile law to a group of law enforcement officers at the Alliance For Children. They shared key information about taking a juvenile into custody, filing a case, and maintaining the confidentiality of juvenile records.



Recognition



Unbound Now recognized DA Sorrells with its Three Key Award, honoring him for ensuring that this office prosecutes human trafficking cases and seeks justice for Tarrant County victims and their families. "I'm humbled and honored to be recognized by an outstanding organization that is working every day to eliminate human trafficking in our community," said Sorrells, who created this office's Human Trafficking Unit after taking office in 2023. Unbound Now is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting survivors and mobilizing resources to fight human trafficking.

Citizen Prosecutor Academy

Do you want to learn about the criminal justice system in Tarrant County?

Then 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 the classes. And you get to tour the Tarrant County Corrections Center.



Sign up for the Fall class that starts September 4, 2025, and runs until November 13, 2025. Classes meet on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and there's no cost. The deadline to submit an application is Friday, July 18.

[Online Application](#)

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



Editorial

DA Communications Officer Anna Tinsley Williams wrote and compiled this newsletter.