

2024



# DALLAS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

ANNUAL REPORT





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As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the progress and impact of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office in our continued pursuit of justice, fairness, and public safety. Our mission remains clear: to uphold the law with integrity, to serve our community with compassion, and to seek justice for all.

In 2024, we strengthened our partnerships with law enforcement, community organizations, and advocacy groups to enhance public safety while embracing reforms that make our justice system more fair and effective.

Through initiatives like the Expunction Expo, we have helped hundreds of individuals clear their criminal records, providing a second chance for those who have paid their debt to society. Our Conviction Integrity Unit continues its vital work in reviewing cases to prevent and correct wrongful convictions, reaffirming our commitment to justice that is both swift and accurate.

Additionally, our Specialty Courts and Diversion Programs remain a cornerstone of our approach to reducing recidivism and addressing the root causes of criminal behavior. These programs not only hold individuals accountable but also provide them with resources to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to our community.

The strength of our office lies in the dedication of our prosecutors, investigators, and staff, who work tirelessly every day to seek justice on behalf of Dallas County. Their commitment, professionalism, and compassion are what drive our success and help build a safer community.

As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to serve with integrity and fairness. I am grateful for the trust you place in us and for the continued collaboration between law enforcement, community leaders, and the citizens of Dallas County. Together, we will continue to make a difference.

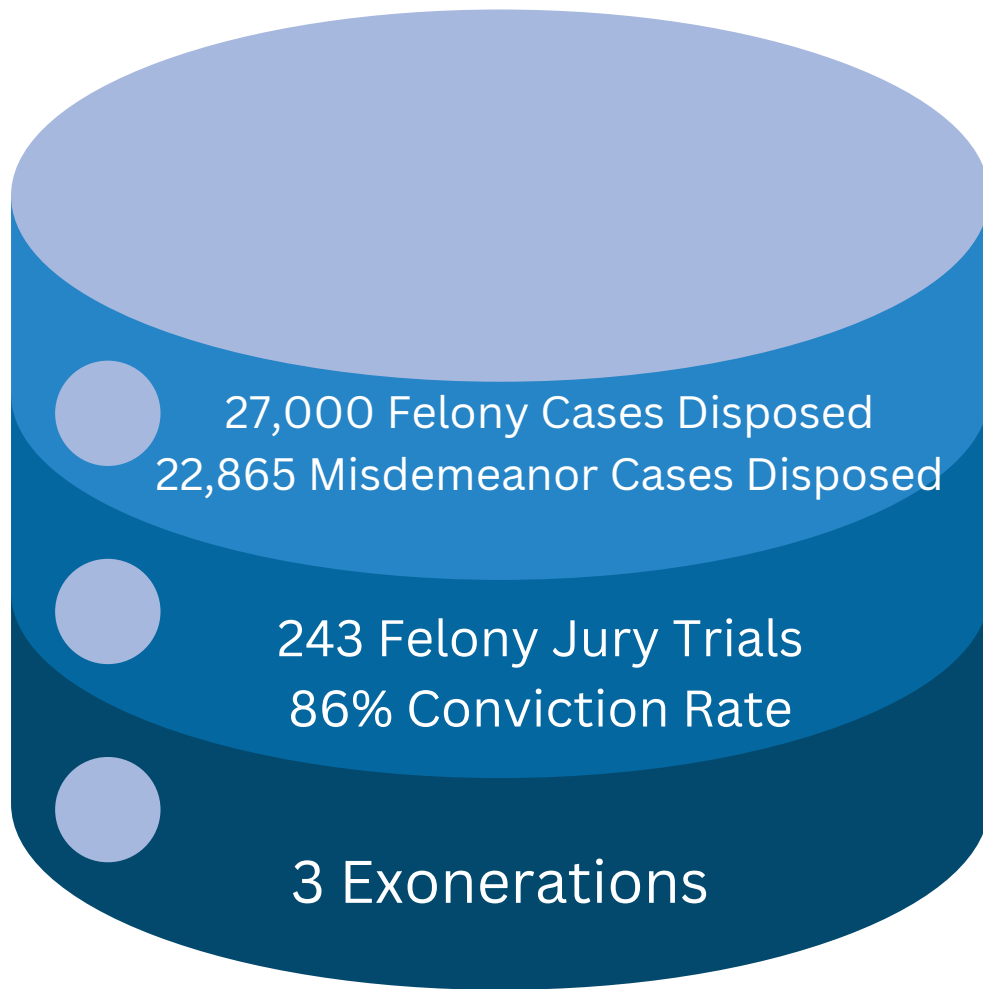
Sincerely,



John Creuzot  
Dallas County Criminal District Attorney



# 2024 by the Numbers



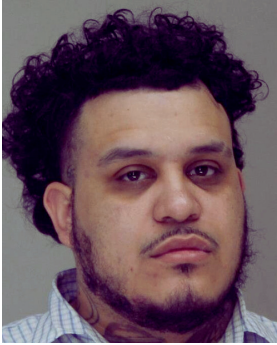
## Top 5 Offenses Received in 2024:

1. Assault causing bodily injury to a family member
2. Possession of a Controlled Substance <1G
3. Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon
4. Criminal Trespass
5. Driving While Intoxicated

# Historic Moments

2024 was a year for the history books. Many firsts were achieved and a big anniversary was marked!

## Dallas County saw its first ever fentanyl jury trial



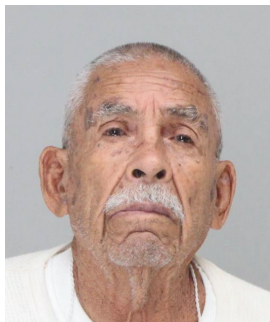
Richard Leal

Under the leadership of DA John Creuzot, the office secured a historic 30-year prison sentence for Richard Leal, marking the first fentanyl dealing case tried and sentenced by a Dallas County jury.

Leal, 33, was convicted of manufacturing or delivering a controlled substance after being found in possession of fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and other drugs during a traffic stop. Fentanyl, a deadly opioid, continues to pose a significant threat to public health, and this conviction highlights the DA's commitment to combating the opioid crisis. The case was successfully prosecuted by ADAs Antoinette Wood and Michael Chang with support from Investigator Alex Lipsey.

## Cutting Edge DNA Technology Led to two Historic convictions

Christopher Michael Green, 52, was sentenced to life in prison after being found guilty of Aggravated Sexual Assault in a 2005 cold case. This marked the first Dallas County jury trial to use **Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG)** to identify a suspect. Green was linked to the crime through DNA, which matched him to five other violent assaults, including assaults against minors. Despite his claims of innocence, the jury convicted him based on compelling DNA evidence and survivor testimony. This case highlights the power of IGG and DNA advancements in solving cold cases, thanks to collaboration between the DA's Office, Dallas Police Department, and the FBI Violent Crimes Task Force. Special thanks to the Cold Case Team and all involved in securing justice for the survivors.



Liborio Canales



Christopher Michael Green

Dallas County's first ever murder conviction using Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) to identify a suspect was secured. Liborio Canales, 86, pleaded guilty to the 1986 murder of Barbara Carr Villarreal, receiving a 20-year sentence nearly 38 years after the crime. The case remained unsolved until new DNA testing linked Canales to the crime through IGG, a breakthrough method that has become a key tool in solving cold cases. This conviction underscores Dallas County's leadership in using innovative investigative techniques to bring justice to victims and their families. The case was spearheaded by lead prosecutor Leighton D'Antoni, Investigator Jon Wakefield, and the SAKI Cold Case Team.

# Historic Moments

## 30 Years of Helping our Smallest Victims

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office, in partnership with the National Council of Jewish Women Dallas (NCJW), Dallas Children's Advocacy Center (DCAC), and Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA), proudly celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Kids in Court (KIC) program. For three decades, KIC has helped child victims and witnesses navigate the court process by creating a supportive and less intimidating environment. The program offers role-play, educational sessions, and interactive activities, allowing children to understand courtroom roles while caregivers learn about the process. This collaboration provides vital emotional support for children involved in traumatic cases, empowering them and reducing their anxiety about testifying. Through the continued efforts of community partners, KIC remains an invaluable resource for young victims and their families.



## Office Wellness

This year, the Dallas County District Attorney's Office launched a historic wellness initiative to support the mental and physical well-being of its employees. Recognizing the unique challenges and stresses faced by prosecutors, the office partnered with F1RST, a comprehensive wellness program, to provide tailored resources addressing vicarious trauma, stress, and overall health.

Through this initiative, staff receive resiliency training and access to mental health services, nutritionists, therapists, and recovery specialists. This proactive step demonstrates the office's commitment to caring for its people, ensuring they are equipped to pursue justice while maintaining their own well-being.



# In the Media



ADA Jason Fine, “Under the Friday Night Lights”  
Prosecution of Yaqub Talib



DA Creuzot & ADA Glen Fitzmartin on Dr. Phil discussing prosecution of Billy Chemirmir



ADA Stephanie Fargo, “Taking the Stand”  
Prosecution of Richard Acosta



**Dallas County DA uses tech tools in building case against Rashee Rice**

District Attorney's Vehicular Crimes Unit prosecutes cases that involve allegations of dangerous driving and excessive speeds

DA Creuzot on NBC5



ADA Jessica Trevizo, “Fatal Attraction”  
Prosecution of Brandon Sampson



DA Creuzot & ADA Glen Fitzmartin, “The Pillowcase Murders”  
Prosecution of Billy Chemirmir



# Division Highlights



# Animal Cruelty Unit + Community Prosecution

## Notable Achievements:

- April 2024: Commissioners Court recognized April as Animal Cruelty Awareness Month and awarded the unit a proclamation.
- June 2024: Chief ADA Jessica Trevizo was elected commencement speaker at the Dallas County Leadership and Management Academy Class of 2024.
- August 2024: Hosted Commissioner Garcia for a Meet and Greet with Office Staff.
- November 2024: ADA Trevizo was awarded the Humane Legal Eagle Award for leading Texas in animal cruelty prosecutions.



## New in 2024:

- Conducted multiple Animal Cruelty trainings at police departments across Dallas County.
- Conducted training for forensic vets at Operation Kindness.
- Dallas Sheriff's Office agreed to file animal cruelty cases on behalf of unincorporated Dallas County cities, supported by the SPCA.
- Reduced Truancy docket.
- Increased case filings from cities following agency trainings.

## By The Numbers:

- Misdemeanor Case Filed: 109
- Misdemeanor Cases Disposed: 87
- Felony Cases Filed: 33
- Felony Cases Disposed: 26

### Case Spotlight:

#### State of Texas v. Sam Tamborello

Defendant pepper sprayed a neighbor's leashed dog without cause. Evidence showed defendant had a history of spraying random dogs and harassing neighbors.

GUILTY with an agreed sentence of 5 years in prison probated over 4 years, waived right to appeal and can never own pets.

# Appellate Division

## 2024 Summary:

The Appellate Division of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office consists of 22 attorneys and 5 support staff. Among the attorneys, five are members of the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, eight have published legal scholarship, and two are Board Certified in Criminal Appellate Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

The Division's mission is to ensure that justice is served by reviewing and defending the legality of the State's judgments, representing the State in appellate and postconviction litigation, and supporting prosecutors with research and legal strategy.

## Notable Achievements:

In 2024, the Appellate Division handled a wide range of responsibilities and achieved the following:

- 226 direct appeal briefs filed.
- 301 responses to applications for post-conviction habeas corpus relief.
- 1,427 petitions for expunction processed.
- 1,041 responses to Public Information Act (PIA) requests.
- 2,730 responses to requests from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).
- 176 interstate subpoenas obtained to support trial prosecutions.
- 283 expunction petitioners represented with assistance from 80+ volunteer attorneys during the 2024 Dallas County Expunction Expo.
- Represented the State in 9 writ hearings, including 1 capital writ.
- Argued cases before the Court of Criminal Appeals and the Fifth Court of Appeals.
- Contributed over 320 hours of legal research in support of the trial divisions.
- Assisted prosecutors from 7 other states in securing testimony from Texas-based witnesses for out-of-state prosecutions.

### Case Spotlight:

#### Aaron Rayshan Wells v. The State of Texas

Defendant challenged the use of geofence warrant evidence in a capital murder conviction. Attorney Joshua Vanderslice defended the State's use of this novel investigatory technique at the Dallas Court of Appeals and again before the Court of Criminal Appeals during a special session at Sul Ross State University. The case remains under advisement.



Mr. Vanderslice was awarded the 2024 Appellate Excellence Award for his work.

# Civil Division

## 2024 Summary:

The Civil Division of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office continued to serve as legal counsel to Dallas County government, providing litigation defense, contract review, and legal guidance across a broad range of matters. The division also managed high-volume public information requests, emergency legal filings, and election-related issues, playing a vital role in both county operations and crisis response.

## Notable Achievements:

In 2024, the Civil Division handled the following:

- 175 legal claims processed
- 530 contracts reviewed and managed (many containing multiple sub-agreements)
- 802 legal opinions issued
- 54 litigation matters (37 state and 17 federal)
- 104 subpoenas responded to
- 12 employment grievances addressed
- 2,180+ Public Information Act (PIA) requests processed
- 200 third-party PIA letters reviewed and managed

### Case Spotlight:

Heiden Garcia, Dallas County Administrator, Petitioner

Filed and obtained emergency court approval to open and retabulate ballots from three vote centers after a voting discrepancy was discovered. This swift legal action ensured election accuracy and transparency.



# Cold Case Unit

## 2024 Summary

This unit was established in 2024 thanks to a \$2,366,241 federal grant. This grant will fully fund this initiative for the next three years, reinforcing Dallas County's commitment to solving cold cases and providing justice for survivors of violent crimes.

Cold Case is comprised of two subunits that are dedicated to the:

1. investigation and prosecution of previously untested sexual assault kits and cold case sexual assault cases
  - a. This unit began in 2015 and was created to address the over 4000 untested sexual assault kits at the Dallas Police Department
2. Investigation and prosecution of unsolved, cold case homicides
  - a. This newly formed subunit will work to address the over 4,000 unsolved homicides at the Dallas Police Department and will also work with other law enforcement agencies to provide support on unsolved homicides. This grant is a partnership between the Dallas Police Department, the FBI and the Dallas County DA's office.

The Cold Case Unit includes two prosecutors, one investigator, a victim advocate, and a site coordinator, all of whom devote their full time to investigating and prosecuting cold cases. The addition of a victim advocate will ensure trauma-informed care and streamlined services for survivors of homicide victims throughout the notification and justice process.

## Notable Achievements

- Mackenzie Kile won Advocate of the Year
- ADA Leighton D'Antoni was co-winner of Prosecutor of the Year and was featured in an episode of Bloodline Detectives.



- Multiple members of this unit serve on the Dallas County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).
- D'Antoni and Kile both serve on the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivor's Task Force.

# Conviction Integrity Unit

The Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) is primarily dedicated to reviewing cases involving allegations of actual innocence, but it also reviews cases involving instances of wrongful conviction when related to an innocence claim as well as a result of systematic errors. The CIU has been responsible for exonerations in Dallas County since its establishment in 2007.

## New in 2024

The CIU marked the exonerations of three individuals, Benjamin Spencer, Andrew Roark and Curtis Davis.



DA Creuzot & Members of the CIU with Benjamin Spencer

### Case Spotlight:

Benjamin Spencer, 59, was exonerated of his 1988 aggravated robbery conviction after an extensive reinvestigation by the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) found him innocent. Originally convicted of murder in 1987 and sentenced to 35 years in prison, Spencer was retried and convicted of aggravated robbery with a life sentence, but maintained his innocence throughout.

The CIU, prompted by new evidence from Spencer's defense team and uncovering prosecutorial misconduct including withheld evidence and false witness testimony, concluded there was no credible evidence linking Spencer to the crime.

After serving 34 years, Spencer's conviction was overturned by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, marking Dallas County's 46th exoneration since 2001.

The case highlights the collaborative efforts of the DA's office, Spencer's defense team, and organizations dedicated to correcting wrongful convictions.

# Crimes Against Children Division

## Notable Achievements:

Members of the Crimes Against Children Division continued to lead in child advocacy efforts across Dallas County. Administrative Chief Amy Derrick served on the Board of Trustees for the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center, while Division Chief Summer Elmazi contributed her expertise as a member of the Center's Multidisciplinary Team Committee.

The division also played a critical role in statewide and community initiatives related to child protection and victim support, strengthening partnerships with law enforcement, non-profits, and advocacy organizations.

## 2024 By the Numbers:

- Cases Received: 1,456
- Conviction Rate: 96%
- Jury Trials: 65
  - 53 guilty verdicts
  - 2 not guilty
  - 12 mistrials/busted panels
- Notable Sentences: 16 cases resulted in 99-year or life sentences



### Case Spotlight:

State vs. William Beckam

Aggravated Sexual Assault of a Child

The defendant, a stranger to the 13-year-old victim, abducted the child by luring him into a vehicle under the pretense of offering food and drink. Instead, the defendant drove to a secluded church parking lot, where he brandished a firearm and assaulted the child for nearly an hour. Following the assault, the defendant threatened the child before dropping him near his home.

Thanks to the victim's detailed account, law enforcement quickly identified and arrested the defendant. A comprehensive investigation revealed damning digital, physical, and forensic evidence—including photographs taken during the assault, metadata confirming locations, matching DNA, and further child pornography offenses. The defendant was also linked to two other similar assaults and expressed intent to continue such crimes.

The jury found the defendant guilty. Before the punishment phase could begin, the defendant opted to plead guilty and accept a life without parole sentence for this and related offenses.

# Family Violence Division

## Notable Achievements

The Family Violence Division made significant strides in training and outreach during 2024. Victim Advocate Shanika Davis led comprehensive sessions at the Dallas County Sheriff’s Office Academy covering topics such as Domestic Violence 101, Batterer Tactics, Victim Rights, Trauma-Informed Approaches, and Building Rapport with Victims. She also served as Chairperson of the City of DeSoto’s Domestic Violence Advisory Commission.

ADAs Megan Reed, Mackensie Pflieger, and Theresa Austin conducted specialized training for Dallas Police Department detectives and community stakeholders, including shelter providers and hospital personnel. Additionally, Theresa Austin represented the office at SMU’s Take Back the Law event, where she spoke about careers in law that support survivors of gender-based violence.

## New in 2024

This year, the division expanded its team with the addition of a new Victim Advocate, funded through the Multi-Purpose Advocacy Project from the Office of the Governor of Texas.

## Case Intake and Dispositions

- Cases Received: 3,594 felony intimate partner cases
- Cases Resolved: 2,255 felony family violence cases resolved through plea, trial, or dismissal

## Community Engagement

The division actively participated in Domestic Violence Awareness Month, co-hosting events with law enforcement and local nonprofits. At a Dallas Police Department forum, prosecutors Megan Reed and Mackensie Pflieger presented on family violence prosecutions, while Theresa Austin provided insights on protective orders and support from the DA’s Office.

### Case Spotlight:

State vs. Elijah Alaniz

Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon Causing Serious Bodily Injury to a Family Member

After returning home from a night out, the defendant violently attacked his girlfriend when she attempted to leave the apartment following a threat on her life. He dragged her back inside by her hair and subjected her to a prolonged, brutal assault that included repeated head trauma, strangulation, rib fractures, and an attempt to snap her neck. The victim ultimately survived and was able to alert her mother, who contacted the police. She suffered severe injuries, including a brain bleed, broken nose and jaw, multiple broken ribs, and a collapsed lung. The jury learned that the defendant was on probation for DWI at the time and had a history of violence against other women dating back to 2017.

He was found guilty and sentenced to 40 years in prison.



## **PROTECTIVE ORDER UNIT**

### **Notable Achievements**

- Updated Protective Order Brochure and District Attorney's website to better serve survivors.
- Participated in community training events, including "In the Neighborhood: Town Hall" with Dallas County Sheriff and Domestic Violence Investigations with Dallas Police Department.

### **New in 2024**

- Protective Order Attorneys provided training to Dallas Police victim advocates and family violence detectives.

### **By the Numbers**

- Victims' Advocates screened 3,008 Protective Order applicants in 2024.
- Over 450 applicants screened through Satellite Offices.
- Over 1,300 protective orders filed at Frank Crowley and George Allen court buildings.



## **VICTIM WITNESS**

### **By the Numbers**

- 611 people requested certification for UVisas
  - 307 certifications issued after verifying cooperation with DA's Office.
- 10,346 victim packets sent out, including forms for Victim Impact Statements, Crime Victims' Compensation, and V.I.N.E., along with court process information and DA's letter.
- Assisted over 150 District Attorney witnesses with travel arrangements for court testimony in Dallas County.



# Grand Jury/Intake Division

## Notable Achievements

- Developed a process for coordinated management of federal prisoners with state charges in collaboration with US Marshals Service and US Attorney's Office.
- Deputy Chief Jennifer Kachel spoke at the Texas Hospital Association Annual Conference about 2023 legislative changes on hospital employee assaults.
- Deputy Chief Gary McDonald continued expert roles at the Texas Department of Insurance, and was elected Secretary of the Jurisprudence Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. He also joined ad hoc committees on vicarious trauma and firearm/toolmark standards.

## New in 2024

- Assigned a designated DAO Homicide Investigator to Chief Homicide Intake and Grand Jury prosecutor for thorough case prep.

### By The Numbers:

- Received 63,486 cases from Law Enforcement Agencies
- Processed 50,836 total felony and misdemeanor cases
- Accepted 43,003 cases
- Held 449 Grand Jury sessions



# Investigators

## 2024 Highlights

- Contributed to charities and organizations, including Texas Law Enforcement Torch Run, 2nd Chance Boxing Gym, Garland Police Foundation, First Tee, Make-A-Wish, Dallas PD Fallen Officers BBQ, and Officer Ingram fund.
- Conducted six 16-hour mandated TCOLE courses, including updated ALERRT Active Shooter Response Training involving prosecutors and support staff.
- All investigators met mandatory training hours within the current two-year cycle.
- Chief Rendon implemented policies for felony court investigators to pitch murder cases early to prosecutors to improve case quality.
- Reorganized Investigative Division for efficiency, assigning an Investigator to Intake Division to review murder/high-profile cases prior to formal acceptance.



# Juvenile Division

## 2024 Summary:

- The Juvenile Division had a very busy year, resolving approximately 3,300 juvenile delinquency (JD) cases.
- Disposed over 900 child welfare and permanency court cases, impacting about 1,300 children.
- The Child Protection and Permanency Court (CPPC) held approximately 1,700 hearings resulting in adoptions, preparations for adult living, and support for disabled youth.

## Initiatives and Focus:

- The JD arm continues to develop and integrate evidence-based decision-making to support best youth outcomes, including:
  - Reduction in petitions filed
  - Increase in diversionary and community-based programs
  - Significant reduction in juvenile detention population
  - Timely final dispositions on cases
- The child welfare arm (including CPPC) continues to ensure the safety of vulnerable children affected by abuse, neglect, and maltreatment allegations.
- The division also actively educates and presents on juvenile law updates and issues to community partners, law enforcement, and DA office staff at both local and state levels.

### Notable Cases:

#### JD – Determinate Sentence:

In May 2024, a 14-year-old boy was murdered outside his home after attempting to sell an assault rifle via Instagram in what was a setup. The Respondent and co-Defendant shot and killed the victim, then took the assault rifle.

The following day, the Respondent and friends caused a disturbance at a convenience store, brandishing guns and shooting at the clerk, who returned fire and shot the Respondent in the leg.

The Respondent avoided the hospital but was later found in a hotel room with the assault rifle and other weapons during a police search.

Outcome: The Respondent was committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department for 30 years. The Juvenile Division collaborated with the Adult Division to secure an implication and testimony agreement for the related Capital Murder case.

#### CPS / Domestic Relations – Family Court:

A 6-year-old girl was abandoned at Baylor Hospital by an unknown woman, later identified through media and family interviews as her mother. The mother had a history of mental illness and prior CPS involvement resulting in termination of parental rights for five older half-siblings. The abandoned child’s father was unknown; DFPS found a suitable relative caregiver (a maternal cousin).

Despite efforts to locate and engage the biological parents, both were served by publication to terminate parental rights.

Outcome: Parental rights were terminated, custody granted to DFPS, and the child was successfully adopted by the maternal cousin. The child has thrived in the new home and continues therapy to address trauma while advancing educationally.

# Misdemeanor Division

The Misdemeanor Division handles all cases involving offenses punishable by fine and/or confinement in the count jail (Class A and B Misdemeanors). The types of cases prosecuted by this division include, but are not limited to, theft, assault, prostitution, criminal trespass, and driving while intoxicated.

The Misdemeanor Division actively gives back to the community through several impactful initiatives and also looks for areas to bond and strengthen relationships within the courthouse:

- At The Family Place, they volunteered to support children and families affected by violence, providing much-needed respite.
- In the Lawyer on Loan Program, Ahtoosa Dale from Winston & Strawn stood out by successfully prosecuting multiple misdemeanor jury trials.
- The year also featured the exciting Second Annual Field Day, a fun and friendly competition between prosecutors and defense attorneys, proudly sponsored by the Dallas County District Lawyers Association (DCDLA).



## Case Spotlight: State v. Darryl Goggans

On May 28, 2023, officers from the Dallas Police Department were called to the scene of a major accident. When officers arrived they located the driver who was identified as Darryl Goggans. Goggans had been speeding in the 2700 block of South Vernon Drive when he lost control of his vehicle and hit seven parked vehicles, resulting in severe damage. Goggans admitted to officers that he had smoked crack cocaine before the crash. After administering Standard Field Sobriety Tests, officers arrested Goggans and he consented to a blood draw. The analysis of Goggans' blood showed cocaine and THC in his system. After 18 minutes, the jury found Goggans guilty of DWI.

GUILTY and sentenced to 180 days in jail, probated for 15 months with standard DWI conditions.

# Organized Crime Division

## New in 2024

- The division consisted of six prosecutors and three investigators, led by Chief Andrew Anagnostis and Deputy Chief Clint Stiffler.
- The division resolved 2,680 cases in 2024, the highest in eight years, averaging 446 dispositions per prosecutor.
- Conducted 14 trials, the highest number in eight years.
- Chief Andrew Anagnostis presented on narcotics trafficking, gang involvement, and the fentanyl epidemic at the 2024 Citizen Prosecutor Academy.
- Led efforts to streamline gambling seizures across agencies, ensuring due process while reducing unnecessary prosecutions.
- Collaborated with federal partners to coordinate appropriate returns of federally sentenced prisoners to Dallas County, reducing jail overcrowding.
- Participated actively in the Electronic Surveillance Committee to ensure timely warrant approvals and law enforcement support.

### Notable Cases: State v. Apolinar Zuniga

Convicted for manufacture/delivery of controlled substances with deadly weapons and illegal possession of firearms including Glock Switches. The defendant sold fentanyl, firearms, and drugs via social media and was linked to a criminal street gang.

Sentenced to a combined 32 years in prison.



# Public Integrity Division

## Notable Achievements

- Responded to 32 call outs for officer and security guard involved shootings
- Investigated 9 deaths in custody
- Reviewed 41 citizen complaints
- Numerous cases resolved in which public officials including police officers, licensed security guards, attorneys and nurses were convicted and surrendered their license

## 2020 George Floyd Protest Cases

Led by ADA Patrick Capetillo, the Public Integrity Division resolved 23 cases involving four officers who committed various assaultive offenses against protesters during the 2020 George Floyd Protests. The Dallas County District Attorney’s Office is one of a few offices nationwide to successfully investigate and prosecute officers for excessive force allegations committed during the George Floyd Protests. All four officers surrendered their peace officer licenses and pleaded guilty to assaultive offenses.

### Case Spotlight:

#### State vs. Parris Johnson

On May 10, 2021, the unhoused victim went inside Happy’s convenience store in North Dallas to warm up some oatmeal. As he exited Happy’s, a uniformed security officer, defendant Parris Johnson, exited a marked security vehicle, pulled out a collapsible baton, approached the victim, and ordered him to leave the premises. The victim, still holding his oatmeal, told Johnson that he was leaving but that he was not going to turn his back on Johnson because he didn’t trust him. Irritated by the victim’s supposed defiance, Johnson escalated the situation by pushing the victim and then deploying his pepper spray in his direction. Not accounting for the wind that day, the pepper spray blew back into Johnson’s right eye. The victim, agitated by Johnson’s abuse, ran towards Johnson emptyhanded. Johnson, half blinded by his pepper spray, reacted by drawing his firearm and shooting the victim in the leg, shattering his tibia and fibula. The victim lay on the ground bleeding for six minutes before Johnson even attempted to render aid.

At trial, a jury found Johnson guilty of Aggravated Assault causing Serious Bodily Injury; and sentenced Johnson to 19 years in prison.

# Restorative Justice Division

The Restorative Justice Division (RJD) is dedicated to changing the face of traditional prosecution. Assistant District Attorneys and Staff serve either in the Mental Health Division or in the various Specialty Courts and Diversion Programs in Dallas County.

## Notable Achievements

- Justified continued funding of new positions by showing the Mental Health Division can reduce 91,285 days in jail for mentally ill offenders saving the County \$7,771,092.05!
- Reduced the state mental health hospital waitlist number by reviewing 433 cases.
- Cut the time to intake a case into the division (from 49 days in 2022 to just 4 days in 2024).
- Got the 16.22 queue up to date
- ADA Kendall McKimmey, ADA Lee Pierson, and ADA Gaelle Abrey are working with HHSC (Health and Human Services Commission) to bring FST teams to Dallas County. FST teams are responsible for diverting people into outpatient competency restoration, jail-based competency restoration, or other appropriate services and service settings, as well as identifying individuals who may have restored to trial competency while awaiting restoration services and coordinating trial competency reevaluations.

## Awards and Recognitions

- RJD Chief Julie Turnbull was given the Texas Association of Specialty Courts Hall of Fame Award
- ADA Gaelle Abrey received the JL Turner Legal Association President's Award for Excellent Service
- Mental Health Chief Lee Pierson was nominated and elected to serve as Vice Chairman on the 2025 Housing Forward Board



ADA Julie Turnbull pictured Alongside DA Creuzot, Receiving TASC Hall of Fame Award

## Our Pre-Trial Intervention Program is Working!



Greg DeAngelo, PhD, presenting his findings at TASC Conference

Professor Gregory DeAngelo, Association Professor of Economics at Claremont Graduate University, presented research evaluating prosecutor-led diversion programs across six U.S. jurisdictions: Boulder and Denver (Colorado), Dallas and Fort Bend Counties (Texas), Long Beach, California, and another California jurisdiction. His findings show our programs are working. The reports shows that participants who complete Pretrial Intervention (PTI) agreements in Dallas County reduce recidivism by about 75% compared to traditional courts. For specialty courts, recidivism drops even more, by approximately 93%. This demonstrates the strong, tailored impact of Dallas’s diversion programs in lowering reoffending.

### Case Spotlight: Mom to be

The defendant was charged with evading arrest and Possession of a Controlled Substance <1g.

She had a lot of challenges throughout her Pre-trial Intervention (losing housing and getting out of an abusive relationship). Towards the end of her PTI, she had also found out that she was pregnant. We worked closely with her and her attorney to get the help that she needed.

In the end, we helped her get housing, benefits, and a dismissal for her case. Surprisingly, months after her completion, we received an email from her/defense counsel, stating how grateful she was for our help:

I know I'm no longer your client so it's been a while since we spoke but I just wanted to update you on how I've been and hoped you could relay the information to the prosecutor of the mental health program as well because you both have been instrumental in my life's progress. I have continued my sobriety making it 8 months with no relapses. I found full time employment shortly after being released from the program and I now live in my own apartment with my baby girl who I had in August. She's perfect, beautiful, and healthy. I continue to work with Metrocare for my medication and therapy, and I attend NA as much as I can being a busy mom. Thanks to you guys I was able to get my life back in track and I forever grateful. Without that much needed reality check I doubt I would have found the happiness I have now, thank you.



# Sex Assault Division

The Sexual Assault Division is dedicated to prosecuting perpetrators of sexual assault and trafficking. This specialized unit is comprised of specially trained prosecutors, investigators and victim advocates who are dedicated to seeking justice for those who have survived crimes of sexual assault. This unit handles all cases of sexual assault, labor and sexual trafficking occurring to victims who are at least 17 years of age or older.

## By the Numbers

- Received 622 cases
- Had a 100% conviction rate
- Held 12 jury trials
  - Got 11 guilty verdicts
  - 1 hung jury
  - 2 Life sentences

### Case Spotlight:

David Rojas  
Capital Murder

Mary Hauge Kelly was a beloved 78-year-old grandmother who was found raped, murdered (strangled), and stuffed under her bed in January of 1989. After an extensive investigation by the Dallas Police Department, no suspects were identified, and the case went cold. In 2004, the first DNA testing on the case was conducted on the victim’s robe and an unknown male profile was identified. The suspect profile did not hit on any offender in the CODIS database or match any known suspect profiles from the case investigation. In the fall of 2021, the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Team applied for and received a Season of Justice Grant to fund additional testing on the robe. The evidence was sent to Othram Lab where a SNP profile of the suspect was identified. Subsequent genealogical investigation helped identify David Rojas as the suspect. Rojas’s father lived next door to Ms. Kelly in 1989. With the assistance of the FBI, a surreptitious DNA collection from a discarded beer bottle resulted in a direct match of David Rojas to the victim’s robe.

Although the suspect as identified, the case still presented challenges, including the presence of 2 unknown male DNA profile identified on 2 different possible murder weapons (cords) found in the same bedroom as the victim. The State presented a strong case led by DA Investigator Jon Wakefield who testified as the case’s lead investigator. The jury took just two hours to convict Mr. Rojas who was automatically sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole because the case was tried under 1989 law.

GUILTY and sentenced to LIFE in prison.

# Specialized Crime Division

The Specialized Crime Division investigates and prosecutes financial crimes. The division consists of the Elder Abuse Unit, the Fraud/Checks/JP Unit, and White Collar Crime Unit.

## ELDER ABUSE UNIT

### 2024 Summary

- The Elder Abuse Unit resolved 263 felony cases in 2024, along with numerous related misdemeanors.
- The unit conducted seven trials in 2024, including six jury trials and one bench trial. These included serious violent offenses, with several resulting in lengthy penitentiary sentences.
- The unit continued its focus on prosecuting crimes committed against elderly and disabled victims, including complex violent offenses and cases involving manipulation or coercion of vulnerable individuals.
- The unit also expanded in 2024 with the addition of a grant-funded investigator, and an additional prosecutor and victim advocate.
- The team also received statewide recognition for its work in elder justice advocacy, training, and prosecution strategy.

### Awards and Recognitions

- Investigator Charles “Rusty” Taylor was named 2024 DA Investigator of the Year (his second time receiving the honor).
- Chief Alicia Patterson authored and presented multiple papers at statewide conferences on elder abuse, substance abuse in elder victims, and prosecutorial strategies in cases involving disabled victims.

### Case Spotlight:

State v. Courtney Berry

Injury to an Elderly Individual causing Serious Bodily Injury and Witness Tampering

The defendant, a known gang member and drug dealer, was convicted of violently assaulting an elderly disabled man who attempted to stop Berry from beating his pregnant girlfriend. Berry later tampered with the witness by orchestrating threats and impersonating law enforcement while in Guilty and sentenced to 60 years and 25 years in prison, respectively.

## FRAUD UNIT

### **Restitution/Fees Collected**

- Hot Checks: \$296,523
- DA Hot Check Fees: \$7,233
- THHS DA Fee: \$1,120
- Non-Check Restitution: \$1,849,040.24
- Memo: \$289,784
- AIM: \$22,700
- Restorative Justice: \$405
- THHS: \$77,564.01

## GANG UNIT AND COMMUNITY PROSECUTION UNIT

The Gang Unit is tasked with prosecuting offenses involving Criminal Street Gangs, Prison Gangs and Transnational Criminal Organizations. Texas Law Defines a Criminal Street Gang as a group of three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities.

The Community Response Team (CRT) is a focused, adaptive prosecution unit that focuses on offenders who pose the biggest threats or concerns to law enforcement and the community. The Community Response Team also looks at trends in crimes and prosecutes those cases in an effort to help the community or groups affected by these crimes. The Community Response Team collaborates with State and Federal law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI's Violent Crimes Task Force, to reduce and eliminate the revolving door mentality of these offenders.

### **By the Numbers**

- Gang Open Pleas: 5
- Gang Unit Trials: 9
- Gang Total Dispositions: 272
- CRT Open Pleas: 4
- CRT Trials: 4
- CRT Total Dispositions: 545

### **Notable Achievements**

ADA Krystal Biggins was named Prosecutor of the Year



### Case Spotlight:

#### State vs. Terrius Randolph Capital Murder

In August 2019, the victim was visiting Texas from Nigeria and was set to go back in 2 days. The defendant, using a false name, created posts on LetGo advertising phones for sale. The victim had been buying phones to take back to friends and family in Nigeria and offered to buy a phone from the defendant.

The two met in the defendant's neighborhood and the defendant immediately began robbing the victim at gunpoint. The defendant shot the victim in the leg, hitting him in the femoral artery and causing him to bleed-out almost immediately. An anonymous tip led the DPD Fugitive Unit to the defendant hiding out in a motel 4 days after the offense.

GUILTY and sentenced to LIFE in prison without the possibility of parole

## WHITE COLLAR CRIME UNIT

### Notable Achievements

- ADA Melinda Chaney received award from Louis Vuitton for intellectual property prosecution.
- Investigator Charles Taylor named Investigator of the Year; Investigator Seancory Patton won Above-and-Beyond Award.
- Financial Analyst Deanna Debenport became Certified Fraud Examiner.

### New in 2024

- Welcomed Shenna Oriabure as program manager for Focused Deterrence program, supported by a grant.

### By the Numbers

- Case Intake Reviews: 252
- Number of Overall Dispositions:
  - Trials and Pleas: 296
    - Jury Trials: 9
    - Open Pleas: 19
    - Dismissals: 92
- Restitution Secured: \$5,393,678

### Case Spotlight

- State v. Whitney Foster: Theft 1st Degree (Deed Fraud), 35 years prison.
- State v. Jennifer Stricker: Theft 2nd Degree (Employee Embezzlement), 14 years prison + restitution.
- State v. Robert Ybarra: Theft 3rd Degree (Contractor Scam), 10 years probated + restitution.

# Vehicular Crimes Unit

## Notable Achievements

- The division was honored with the Texas Impaired Driving Safety Award by the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force for its commitment to road safety and impaired driving prosecution.
- Assistant District Attorney Priscilla Pelli was awarded the Prosecutor Service Award by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), highlighting her exemplary work in vehicular crime cases.
- In 2024, the division handled what may be Texas's first case applying Bentley's Law, which mandates restitution to children of deceased DWI victims, marking a significant development in victim-centered justice.



## New in 2024

- The division expanded its capacity in 2024, growing to include three prosecutors, two investigators, and one paralegal, enabling more robust prosecution of serious vehicular offenses and better support for victims and families.

## 2By the Numbers

- Total Defendants: 45
- Total Charges/Indictments: 90
- Dispositions:
  - Pleas: 69
  - Deferred: 11
  - Dismissed: 7
  - Jury Trial – Guilty: 1
  - Bench Trial – Guilty: 1
  - No Bill: 1



## Case Spotlight

State vs. Hector Lemus

Intoxication Manslaughter & Intoxication Assault

On December 8, 2023, while traveling to care for an elderly relative, the victims in this case were struck by the defendant, who was driving at 98 mph under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. The impact caused the victims' vehicle to roll over and become engulfed in flames. One victim was trapped and died at the scene; the other was rescued by bystanders and sustained burns covering over 60% of her body, leading to the amputation of both legs. A blood test confirmed the defendant's intoxication, with results showing nearly double the legal limit of alcohol. He pled guilty to both charges and was sentenced to the maximum under the law: 20 years for Intoxication Manslaughter and 10 years for Intoxication Assault.

The judge also made an affirmative deadly weapon finding, requiring the defendant to serve at least half of his sentence before parole eligibility.