

Information for Victims & Witnesses of Crime

21st Judicial District – Williamson County

Phone: 615-794-7275

E-mail: franklin@tndagc.org

Website: www.tennesseeda.org/district-21/

Stages of Prosecution:

General Sessions

General Sessions court is the first court in which most criminal cases originate. This court generally handles misdemeanor charges. A victim/witness coordinator will be present to answer questions and assist victims throughout the court day. General Sessions court days are often long days. Please stay close to the courtroom throughout the day so that our office can find you when necessary.

Preliminary Hearing

The defendant has the right to request a preliminary hearing in General Sessions Court. The victim will typically be notified of the preliminary hearing and will often be needed to testify. The Victim/Witness Coordinator and the Prosecutor will answer victim questions prior to the hearing. If you are called to testify, take a deep breath, and speak clearly. Always tell the truth. If you don't understand a question, it is okay to ask for clarification. If at the end of the hearing, the judge finds probable cause, or if the defendant waives his/her right to a hearing, the case will be sent to the Grand Jury.

Grand Jury

The Grand Jury is a panel of 12 citizen jurors and one foreperson. The proceedings are secret, and no Grand Jury member may discuss the testimony heard. Neither the victim nor the defendant is present at Grand Jury. If the Grand Jury decides there is enough evidence, a True Bill or indictment is returned, and the case proceeds to Circuit Criminal Court. If the Grand Jury decides there is insufficient evidence, the charges are dropped, and the case will not go to Circuit Criminal Court. The District Attorney's Office cannot comment on a case that is pending Grand Jury. The victim will be notified of an indictment only after the defendant has been notified.

Criminal Circuit Court

Criminal Circuit Court typically handles felony charges. If your case progresses to Criminal Circuit Court you will continue to have a Victim/Witness Coordinator to assist you through the process, keep you updated, and answer questions. The Criminal Circuit Court process moves more slowly than General Sessions Court. You are welcome to attend any and all Criminal Circuit Court dates you want to attend, however we will notify you ahead of time if your presence is required.

Victims' Rights:

Article 1 section 35 of the Tennessee Constitution provides the following rights for victims of crime:

- The right to confer with the prosecution.
- The right to be free from intimidation, harassment, and abuse.
- The right to be present at all proceedings where the defendant has the right to be present.
- The right to be heard, when relevant, at all critical stages of the criminal justice process.
- The right to be informed of all proceedings, and of the release, transfer, or escape of the accused or convicted person.
- The right to a speedy trial or disposition and a prompt and final conclusion of the case after the conviction or sentence.
- The right to restitution from the offender.
- The right to be informed of your constitutional rights as a crime victim.

NOTICE OF GRIEVANCE: If you feel that your rights as a victim have been violated, please notify Shannon Welch, Victim/ Witness Coordinator at (615) 790-4428 or smwelch@tndagc.org.

Resources:

Criminal Injuries Compensation

If you or someone you know has been an innocent victim of a violent crime in Tennessee, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund may be a financial resource for you. Victims and claimants who meet eligibility requirements may be reimbursed for medical expenses, loss of wages, funeral expenses, and other unforeseen costs related to the crime. To obtain more information about this fund, you may call the CIC office at 866-960-6039 or visit the CIC website at treasury.tn.gov/injury or ask your victim/witness coordinator for more information.

VINELink - TN SAVIN

Vine is a service that provides members of the public with updates on the status of inmates both in county jails and in TDOC custody. This is offered free of charge and is completely confidential and features multiple language support. To access offender custody information and register to be notified of changes in the custody status of an offender: Call 1-888-868-4631; Visit www.vinelink.com; Download the VineLink mobile app; TTY users, call 1-866-847-1298.

TN Department of Correction – Victim Services

State offender information: Phone: 615-253-8145; Website: www.tn.gov/correction/victim-services.html

TN Board of Probation and Parole – Victim Services

Phone: 615-532-8112; Website: www.tn.gov/bop/about-us/divisions/bop-victim-services.html

Tennessee Voices for Victims

TN Voices for Victims enables crime victims across the state to network with one another and journey toward healing. Website: www.tnvoicesforvictims.org

Stronger Together

The TN District Attorneys General Conference provides post-case resolution services, advocacy opportunities, and legislative updates to victims who are interested. Phone: 615-600-5674 Website: www.tndagc.org/stronger-together/



Scan this QR code or go to www.tennesseeda.org/district-21/ to visit our website.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPECIFIC RESOURCES:

BRIDGES – Domestic Violence Center

Provides local direct victim services.

Website: www.bridgesdvc.org

E-mail: info@bridgesdvc.org

24-Hour Hotline: 615-599-5777

TN Domestic Violence HOTLINE

Phone: 1-800-356-6737

National Domestic Violence HOTLINE

Phone: 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY/TDD)

Website: www.ndvh.org

TN Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Phone: 615-386-9406 or 1-800-289-9018

Website: www.tncoalition.org

Safe at Home

If you are a survivor of domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, or other sexual offense and concerned that the defendant might find your location, Tennessee's Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program can help to maintain the security of your home, work, or school address.

Phone: 615-253-3043

E-mail: TNSOS.SAFE@tn.gov

Website: sos.tn.gov/safeathome

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee

If you need a lawyer for a divorce involving spouse or child abuse, order of protection, or other civil action and can't afford one, you might qualify for help from a Legal Aid office.

Phone: 615-244-6610

Website: www.las.org