

A Project of Los Angeles Walks



RESOURCE GUIDE

Guidance for those dealing with a sudden
loss made by families who have gone
through a similar experience

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WE UNDERSTAND.

We are individuals who have lost loved ones or have been injured in traffic crashes. We can offer support and opportunities for action to people who share in our unique grief.

JOIN US.

Turn your grief towards action. Together we can fight for change that makes our streets safe for everyone.

AT SOCAL FAMILIES FOR SAFE STREETS...

We envision streets where people walking, bicycling, taking transit, and driving safely co-exist, and where children, seniors and people of all abilities can travel without risk of harm—where no loss of life in traffic is acceptable.



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You may feel lost, not knowing what to do next or who to contact. We are here to listen and can refer you to resources and offer support. We have created this to be a simple reference guide. For more detailed information please visit our website or contact us with questions you may have.

1. START AN INSURANCE CLAIM (IF APPLICABLE)

Begin with the driver's auto insurance. File a claim with their insurance.

Check your own auto insurance as well; there may be pedestrian or cyclist coverage included in your policy. Ask your insurance agent if you are unsure what costs your policy will cover.

At the hospital, seek out the patient advocate or case manager; both can help you with insurance and/or grief support.

2. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Look into grief support groups and/or individual counseling. We recommend The Compassionate Friends, Our House Grief Support Center, and SAFE Support. Your local place of worship may provide counseling and support.

Family support is also very important as children/teens tend to get forgotten in the grief process of the parents.

Hospital staff can help with counseling and in seeking grief support. Ask social workers, hospice, and the palliative care department for support.

Appoint a family spokesperson, if needed, to lessen repeating the trauma of your loss. Choose either a trusted relative, your pastor, or your lawyer to speak to the media, police, or court on your behalf.

3. TRACK THE COLLISION INVESTIGATION

Stay involved. Get to know the detective working on your case, get the case number, and request the police case report. Continue to ask questions, as some families have gathered evidence that sometimes is missed by the investigating officer.

Police are required to: interview witnesses, check for cameras that may have recorded the collision, determine whether the driver was distracted or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

You may want to appoint a trusted family member or attorney to handle this work. It is extremely important to stay involved and make sure all of these critical steps are completed.

4. UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Legal System is what you use to hold the driver accountable for his/her actions. It is often a long and hard process, sometimes taking years to get to trial. Having a family advocate and trusted lawyer will help you through this process.

Criminal Court: It is up to the District Attorney to pursue felony charges and City Attorney to pursue misdemeanor charges against the driver. A decision is made based on the evidence discovered during the crash investigation. You may have to fight to make sure all evidence is collected and reported correctly. **ASK QUESTIONS** of all who are working on the case.

Civil Court: Allows the family to sue the driver for negligence and financial damages. Although the driver may be found guilty, families may not receive the monetary award stated in court. Often a driver can file bankruptcy to avoid having to pay.

Traffic Court: The Department of Motor Vehicles determines whether or not to suspend or revoke the license of the driver, and whether or not to impose a fine.

5. SEEK LEGAL SUPPORT

Consult a lawyer. A lawyer will be able to help you through the insurance process and help you to understand how to hold the driver accountable. An initial consultation with a lawyer will be free. It is helpful to seek advice from more than one lawyer; make sure you are comfortable with the one that you choose.

Be wary of lawyers who contact you after a crash, as those lawyers probably will not have your best interests in mind.

6. NAVIGATING THE CORONER'S OFFICE

If you are next of kin or have power of attorney, then your loved one can be released by the Coroner's office to the care of the Funeral Director you have chosen. The process of release takes 2-3 days after a coroner's examination is completed.

7. SEEK ADDITIONAL SUPPORT (CRIMES ONLY)

The Los Angeles City Attorney's Victim Assistance Program (VAP) may help you if the incident is crime-related, such as vehicular manslaughter, felony hit and run, and/or drunk driving.

There is a victim advocate assigned to every LAPD Traffic Division (Central, South, West, and Valley). A victim advocate can assist with filing for the California Victim Compensation Board (Cal VCB) Program, which may provide financial assistance with medical bills, counseling, and funeral/burial expenses.

Additional information can be found at www.helpLAcimevictims.org or contact (213) 978-4537 and request to speak to a victim advocate assigned to your traffic division.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDERS

In May 2017, Southern California Families for Safe Streets (SoCal Families for Safe Streets) was co-founded by Beverly “Grandma Beverly” Shelton and Dr. Debbie Hsiung, in memory of their loved ones, Zachary and Aidan.

We were brought together under horrible circumstances—Beverly’s 5-year old grandson Zachary was killed by a man driving a work truck in a crosswalk in Berkeley in 2009; Debbie’s 7-year old son Aidan was similarly killed in Pasadena in 2014.

Sadly, our stories are not unique. Every 7 hours in Los Angeles, someone is seriously injured or killed in a traffic incident. Most of these injuries and deaths are preventable, but until we change the hearts and minds of motorists and change the ways our streets are designed, more families like ours will become traumatized.

We honor those we have lost by using SoCal Families for Safe Streets to amplify the voices of people most immediately impacted by dangerous streets and unsafe driving. If you or a loved one has been injured or killed in a traffic-related incident, please consider joining us in our fight for safer streets so that no one else will have to experience such tragedies.

—Beverly Shelton and Debbie Hsiung

LIST OF SOCAL FSS PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Conor Lynch Foundation

inhonorofconor.org

Ghostbikes

*empact.nationbuilder.com/
ghost_bikes_la*

Milt Olin Foundation

miltolinfoundation.org

Ours Did

OursDid.org

SAFE Support

*streetsareforeveryone.org/
safe-support*

Stop4Aidan

stop4aidan.org

Street Racing Kills

streetracingkills.org

Zachary Michael Cruz Foundation

zmcfoundation.org

LA County Bicycle Coalition

la-bike.org

People for Mobility Justice

mobilityjustice.org

Pasadena Complete Streets Coalition

pasadenacsc.org



SAFE Support offers additional free resources and guidance for those who need help after a traffic collision. Call (844) 884-7233 ext. 803 or email Support@StreetsAreForEveryone.org

In the City of Los Angeles, traffic collisions kill around 250 people every year; another 1,000 people are severely injured in collisions. SoCal Families for Safe Streets works to raise awareness of this epidemic. If you have lost a loved one or survived a serious crash, please join us.

We know that getting involved can be hard. We also know the healing power of supporting one another and working to end preventable deaths.

We understand the waves of grief that can sometimes knock us down, but Families for Safe Streets members are here to help lift you up any way we possibly can. **You are not alone.**



Los angeles walks

This resource guide was developed by Southern California Families for Safe Streets, a project of Los Angeles Walks.

Los Angeles Walks is a non-profit organization that trains and mobilizes residents to advocate for safe, comfortable walking environments in neighborhoods across Los Angeles. Through SoCal Families for Safe Streets, LA Walks amplifies the voices of those most personally impacted by dangerous streets and reckless driving, in an effort to create lasting change and a safer city. Los Angeles Walks is a project of Community Partners.

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