

For more information about how to
get involved in HFSG, please contact:

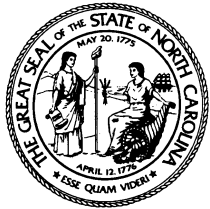
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The District Attorney's Office for
New Hanover and Pender
Counties is a part of:



State of North Carolina
General Court of Justice
Sixth Prosecutorial District
Wilmington, NC 28401

The website www.dac.nc.gov/dac-services/criminal-offender-searches can be used to find information about an offender's location in the North Carolina prison system.

*"What do we live for, if it is not
to make the lives of others less
difficult?"*
-George Eliot

*"There is good help out there.
The question is, will we have the
courage to take advantage of it?"*
-An Internet Newsgroup Post,
Aug. '99

*All quotes taken from *What To
Do When The Police Leave*
by Bill Jenkins.

The Homicide Family Support Group
is sponsored by

The District Attorney's Office of
New Hanover and Pender Counties.
newhanoverpenderda.com

PO Box 352, Wilmington, NC 28402
newhanoverpenderda.com

Homicide Family Support Group



At a time of loss, grief, sadness, shock,
and confusion; there is a place to go
for support and answers.

HFSG BACKGROUND:

The Homicide Family Support Group, HFSG, offers support to those who have lost a loved one to violence. Unfortunately, when violence takes someone, families and friends are not only left with the sadness of their loss, but also with the often-confusing process of Law Enforcement investigations and the Court System.

Members of HFSG have experienced untimely deaths due to crimes such as homicides and fatal traffic accidents. They have knowledge of the court system that can help others who have so many questions. Our members embrace each other and hold one another up when others feel weak and lost.

The District Attorney's Office in New Hanover and Pender Counties formed the Homicide Family Support Group in 1996. The goal is to help families who have lost loved ones come together for support. The group has been a resounding success. Some of our participants have been attending meetings since the program began. Some have gone as far as to cut vacations short to be present for the meetings.

The meetings:

- Meetings are very informal gatherings of victims' families to share information among people with similar experiences.
- Any family members of a homicide victim can attend regardless of when or where the homicide occurred.

- Everyone is given an opportunity to say anything or ask questions.
- We do not discuss details or facts of any specific case without permission of the family and we try not to discuss details because of possible conflicts.
- The District Attorney sponsors the program and is in charge. It is important that no other entity have ownership of this program to prevent it from becoming an adversarial event. It is also important that no group takes ownership and uses it as a vehicle for any personal agendas.
- A simple meal is served. Domino's Pizza provides pizzas and drinks each month. Sitting together and sharing a meal can help bring people closer.
- A victim witness legal assistant is always present and serves as the liaison between victim's families and the District Attorney's Office.
- This is not counseling. This is networking between people who have had similar life experiences.
- The District Attorney explains the court process to new members and what to expect both in and out of court and answers any questions a group member may have.
- Old members often explain to new members what to expect when they go to court and reinforce what the District Attorney has said.
- Often, old members volunteer to attend court with the new members to sit with them for support.
- Members, old and new, are able to exchange telephone numbers.
- The victims' families often bring a picture of the deceased and the group approves the District Attorney placing the picture on the wall of the lobby of the District Attorney's Office.
- The meeting is **not** open to the public or the media.
- Often, people just want someone to listen and give some attention to their feelings about the homicide.
- This is NOT for everyone. When someone joins depends upon their stage of their grief.
- Some attend simply because they want to know that the District Attorney's Office and other group members care about them.
- No money or grants are needed to be a part of HFSG. In fact, money may hinder the program. The program needs to be centered on helping people.

The meetings are generally held once a month, in the evenings in Wilmington. An informal meal is provided by the District Attorney's Office.

District Attorney Jason Smith or a Senior Assistant District Attorney and the homicide Victim Witness Legal Assistant are present at the meetings, for facilitation and to answer questions.



"It's the one governmental program you don't want to be served by, but when you need it, you're glad it's there."

-Magazine Interview, March '98