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Austin American-Statesman

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Dell Children's at 15: Austin hospital builds on its initial promise



Fifteen years ago, Dell Children's Medical Center opened its doors in Austin. It continues to grow and to expand its programs. SARA DIGGINS/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

'The next level'

Nicole Villalpando Austin American-Statesman | USA TODAY NETWORK

Fifteen years ago, Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas opened its doors in Austin. It promised to bring services to Austin for which local children were traveling to Houston, San Antonio and Dallas. • In June 2007, leaders promised that within a year Dell Children's would begin doing bone marrow transplants and kidney transplants. • Those two programs have not yet been realized.

This summer, Dell Children's expects to perform its first pediatric kidney transplant. Within a year or two, it promises to begin a bone marrow transplant program.

Dell Children's at 15 is now beginning to fulfill the promises it made to the community in 2007. It took population growth in the Central Texas, the opening of the University of Texas Dell Medical School and significant investment in the children's hospital by Ascension Seton, which owns the hospital, and private funding by donors such as the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the Nyle Maxwell family through the hospital's foundation.

For its first 10 years, the hospital was built as sort of a Noah's Ark. It hired two doctors for each specialty: two in genetics, two in rheumatology, two in infectious disease, etc.,

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▲ Social worker Daniela Boyce, left, talks to Zaria Grace Jackson, 6 months, being held by her mother, Olivia Guthrie, at Dell Children's Medical Center on April 19, 2021, after the girl recovered from first having a Berlin Heart device and then a heart transplant. Dell Children's has created and developed a full cardiac care program since 2018.

JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

More inside

Dell Children's key dates and what's coming in November. 15A

UVALDE MASS SHOOTING

Video shows police inaction

Officials debate release of recording to public

Tony Plohetski Austin American-Statesman USA TODAY NETWORK

A single Robb Elementary School security camera, mounted at the end of a hallway, captured the horror and devastating law enforcement mistakes that unfolded for more than an hour on May 24.

A 77-minute recording from that camera offers an unabridged view of police inaction, among the clearest accounts of what happened before and after 19 fourth graders and two teachers were gunned down in their classrooms. It also is at the center of a political struggle over what public information from that day should be released and by whom.

Viewed by the American-Statesman, the video shows the 18-year-old gunman dressed in all black with a

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The video is critical because it not only reveals how police responded — and failed to respond — but also shows which agencies were on the scene, a point that increasingly has become a matter of contention.

After Roe ruling, 'sanctuary cities for the unborn' campaign grows

Madlin Mekelburg, Yasmeen Qureshi and Andrea Kramar

Austin American-Statesman USA TODAY NETWORK

ATHENS — Preston Pulley clasped his eldest daughter's hand before bowing his head in prayer and asking God to permanently end abortion in the East Texas town where he was raised.

His family was among a group of 10 worshippers huddled near the site of what these anti-abortion activists consider the first illegal abortion operation in Texas: a family practitioner's office that once sat on Richardson Street and has long since closed. The exact location of the former practice

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Uvalde

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backpack casually walk into a rear entrance of the school carrying the AR-15 he purchased a week earlier after his birthday. At 11:33 a.m., he pauses briefly at a closed classroom door decorated with the words “welcome class” before turning right into the main hall.

He continues to walk uninterrupted down the empty hallway — past a bulletin board and hand sanitizer station mounted on the wall — until he reaches Room 111. The camera shows him turning to his left and unleashing a barrage of gunfire as he advances toward the room. A boy who apparently was in the bathroom is seen peeking around the corner before police later rescue him.

Three minutes after the initial massacre, a group of officers from the Uvalde Police Department and the Uvalde school district moved from two ends of the hall to converge on Rooms 111 and 112 where the gunman was. The video shows them being pushed back by his return fire.

For the next hour, the video reveals what experts have called one of the worst police failures in American history. The footage shows officers massed in the hallway, increasingly armed with protective shields and high-powered weapons, but not entering the classrooms to take down the gunman until 12:52 p.m.

A debate over whether the footage should be released for public viewing has spilled into the open in recent days, with U.S. Rep. Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock and chairman of a House committee investigating the shooting response, and Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin arguing for its release, while Uvalde County District Attorney Christina Mitchell Busbee opposes its disclosure.

Amid a shifting official timeline of the law enforcement response and anger among Uvalde residents over lingering questions about the shooting, it provides an unfiltered view of what transpired.

Busbee's position was outlined in a Friday letter to Burrows from Freeman Martin, the Texas Department of Public Safety deputy director of homeland security operations.

Busbee "has objected to releasing the video and has instructed us not to do so. As the individual with authority to consider whether any criminal prosecution should result from the events in Uvalde,



A security camera at Uvalde's Robb Elementary School shows officers arriving at the school with rifles and at least one ballistic shield at 11:52 a.m. — 19 minutes after the entrance of the gunman who killed 19 fourth graders and two teachers. UVALDE INVESTIGATIVE FILE



State Rep. Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, speaks at a June 9 meeting of the House Investigative Committee on the Robb Elementary School Shooting. Burrows has requested the release of a 77-minute video that captures police missteps outside the Uvalde classrooms where 19 students and two teachers were killed. JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

enforcement officials say she has cited a pending investigation for shielding the video. However, because the gunman is dead, it is not clear what or who is the target of any ongoing case, and Martin said in the letter to Burrows that releasing the video would not interfere with the investigation.

Legal experts say the DPS has the authority to make the video public as the lead agency in the case and is not bound by Busbee's request. However, it is customary for an investigating agency to adhere to such requests from prosecutors.

Other video details

The video is critical because it not only reveals how police responded —

we are guided by her professional judgment regarding the potential impact of releasing the video," Martin wrote.

Busbee has made no public statements — she did not return an email Saturday from the Statesman — but law en-

Continued on next page

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Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin called Friday for the release of video recorded by a hallway camera recorded the shooting at Robb Elementary. ERIC GAY/AP

Continued from previous page

and failed to respond — but also shows which agencies were on the scene, a point that increasingly has become a matter of contention.

McLaughlin has accused DPS Director Steve McCraw of scapegoating local law enforcement, rather than acknowledging that DPS troopers also converged on the scene and similarly failed to act. Indeed, the video shows police from multiple agencies gathered in the hall, including from the DPS.

In a timeline the DPS previously released, Uvalde school district Police Chief Pete Arredondo is heard in a recorded phone call to the Uvalde Police Department saying that officers were only armed with pistols and needed more firepower and protective equipment.

Less than 20 minutes after the first attempt at breaching the classroom, the footage shows officers with a ballistic shield and high-powered assault rifles were inside the school just beneath the hallway camera. The Statesman reported that detail last month and published a screen grab from that moment that sparked national outrage.

According to a timeline from the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training in San Marcos, a DPS special agent was on the scene a minute later, arriving at 11:53, and was told to remain at the perimeter.

The DPS timeline said that the agent went inside the school and asked if children were still inside the classroom. He said, "If there's kids in there, we need to go in there."

The Texas Tribune subsequently published an additional screen grab from the hallway camera that shows officers with four assault rifles and two shields at 12:04 p.m.

According to body camera video, officers spent the next 46 minutes amassing additional protection, including a fourth ballistic shield and tear gas canisters. They discussed various ways to enter the classroom, including using outside windows to kill the gunman.

In portions of the video the Statesman viewed, paramedic teams began setting up in the hallway minutes before the breach to allow them to begin tending to the wounded.

Around 12:50 p.m., the hallway camera shows a team led by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol entering the classroom amid the sound of gunfire. The recent report by the San Marcos-based national experts reviewing the police response said that the gunman had been hiding in a closet but emerged when the team entered the classroom.

Calls for release

Families and others have publicly called for the video to be released in recent days.

In a wrenching interview with CNN, Marcus Lozano, whose sister, teacher Irma Garcia, was killed, said he believed the officers acted with cowardice.

"When it was time to stare death in the face, they went weak in the knees," Lozano said.

"My mom protected those kids, but no one protected her," said Garcia's son, Cristian. "The whole Police Department here are cowards."

On Thursday, Burrows called for the video to be made public, but said he is unable to release it himself because of an agreement he signed June 10 with the DPS.

DPS Deputy Director Freeman Martin responded with a letter saying that the "DPS believes that the video is likely to bring clarity to the public regarding the tragic

events in Uvalde. The video does not contain images of children but it is limited to the law enforcement response up to the moment of the breach."

McLaughlin also issued a statement Friday evening saying that he supports the release of the video from the hallway. He followed up with a statement Saturday to make clear that he was not advocating for the release of any video that would show victims.

"We agree with Burrows that the video is likely to bring clarity to the public, to the families of victims and survivors," McLaughlin said.

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For results, see txlottery.org.

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July 8: night: 5-7-5-7

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July 8: 5-7-9-20-21

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MISS ARDEN ELIZABETH, English Bulldog, passed away at home on June 23, 2022 at the side of the two people who loved her the most after 11 amazing years. Arden was an exceptional bulldog obtaining obedience titles and exceling in multiple AKC rally obedience trials. As a therapy dog, Arden will be missed by those she visited at nursing homes, schools, and Texas Oncology. Arden brought a smile to everyone she met, entertaining them with her hi-fives, handshakes, and kisses. She always drew a crowd when she was out in her stroller, and no one was a stranger. Arden was well known for her yearly Calendars and "PAWTY'S" to bring awareness to canine cancer and raise funds for the National Canine Cancer Foundation (NCCF). She will be missed by all of us, especially her family who will continue her efforts to eliminate canine cancer. Please donate to the National Canine Cancer Foundation <https://wearethecure.org>.