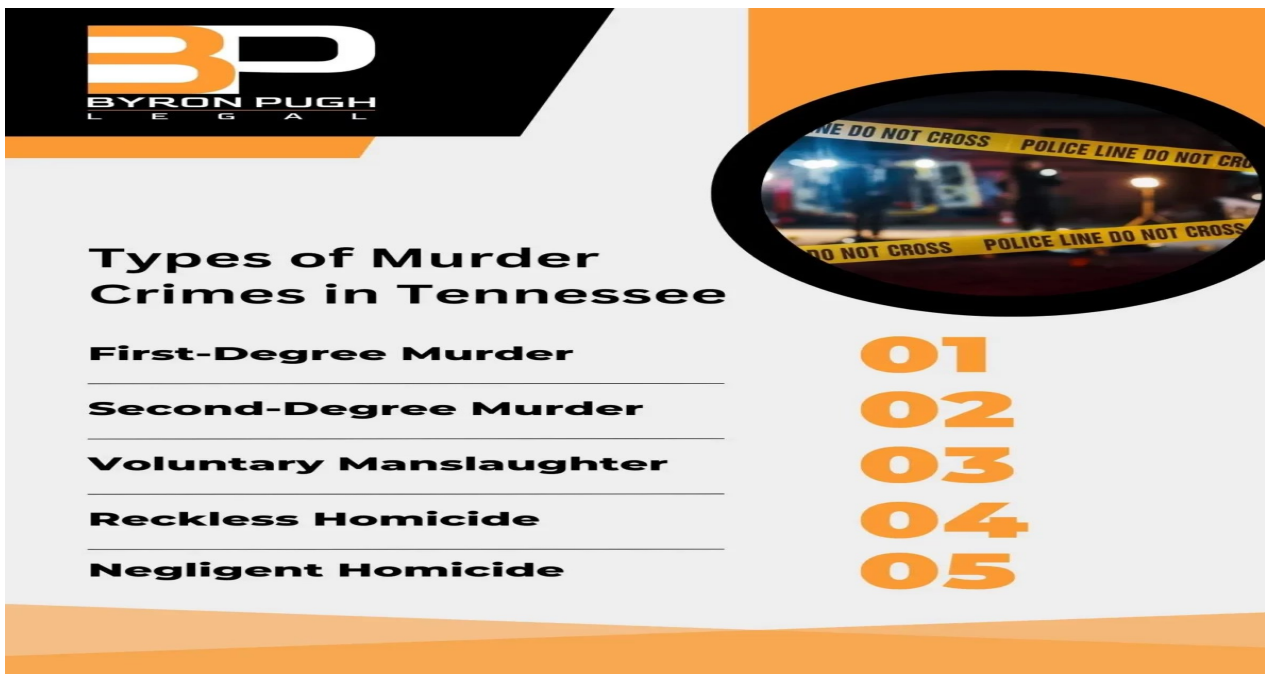




Byron Pugh Legal Publishes Tennessee Murder Charge Guide

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Byron Pugh Legal has published a dated legal guide examining how Tennessee's homicide classification framework shapes the exposure facing defendants in Davidson County, identifying the distinction between first-degree and second-degree murder as among the most consequential determinations in a homicide prosecution. The guide, current as of the firm's publication and based on the Tennessee Code Annotated provisions in effect at that time, notes that the charge level can separate cases where the death penalty is available from those carrying a term of years.

According to the guide, Tennessee defines first-degree murder under T.C.A. Section 39-13-202 to include a premeditated and intentional killing, in which the intent to kill was formed before the act, as well as certain killings committed during a qualifying felony. The statute provides that a first-degree murder conviction may be punishable by death, by imprisonment for life without possibility of parole, or by imprisonment for life. The guide notes that parole eligibility, service requirements, and the availability of specific penalties depend on the statutory language in effect and on case-specific sentencing provisions, and that the firm encourages readers to review the current version of the statute. The firm notes that a Nashville murder defense lawyer familiar with these statutory distinctions can review how they apply to specific facts.

Second-degree murder under T.C.A. Section 39-13-210 generally requires proof that the defendant knowingly caused another person's death, a mental state the guide describes as lower than premeditation. Prosecutors, according to the statute, need not establish that the killing was planned in advance. The guide states that second-degree murder is classified as a Class A felony and that Tennessee sentencing statutes provide for a range of imprisonment for Class A felonies, with release eligibility governed by the applicable release eligibility and sentencing provisions rather than by any single fixed figure. The guide directs readers to the current Tennessee sentencing statutes for the precise ranges and service requirements applicable to a given offense date.

The guide also reviews Tennessee's felony murder theory, referenced in T.C.A. Section 39-13-202, under which first-degree murder may be charged in connection with certain deaths occurring during enumerated felonies such as arson, robbery, burglary, and kidnapping. In the firm's legal analysis, felony murder allegations in Davidson County frequently arise in robbery, home invasion, and carjacking cases, where co-defendants may face first-degree charges even when they did not directly cause the death. The firm characterizes this as its interpretation of how the statute is applied and not as a prediction of any particular case outcome.

Separately, the guide addresses a Tennessee provision treating the unlawful distribution of fentanyl or carfentanil that causes a death as a form of second-degree murder, a statute that can connect drug distribution arrests to homicide-level charges.

The guide identifies the period before indictment as a significant stage in a homicide case. "The Davidson County District Attorney's office makes the charge determination based on the evidence presented to the grand jury, and that decision shapes much of what follows," said Byron Pugh, Criminal Defense Attorney at Byron Pugh Legal. "In my analysis, an attorney who engages before indictment may present evidence bearing on premeditation, question a felony murder predicate, or raise a voluntary manslaughter classification, each carrying different sentencing considerations. The fentanyl provision is worth understanding because a person arrested in a distribution case may face second-degree murder allegations tied to a death they were unaware of, which is why the statutory details deserve careful review."

The guide notes that voluntary manslaughter under T.C.A. Section 39-13-211 requires proof of provocation producing a state of passion, offering an additional classification the statutes recognize. The firm has published the guidance as a reference for defendants and families seeking to understand Tennessee homicide statutes, and additional detail is available from the Byron Pugh Nashville murder defense lawyer team.

Byron Pugh Legal is a criminal defense law firm based in Nashville, Tennessee, representing individuals charged with murder, manslaughter, drug crimes, DUI, domestic assault, and other criminal matters throughout Davidson County and Middle Tennessee. Byron Pugh is a member of the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

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Byron Pugh Legal offers expert criminal defense and family law services in Middle Tennessee, providing personalized attention and strategic advocacy to protect clients' rights.

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