

The Texas Lawbook

Families of 9 Who Died in July 4 Camp Mystic Flood Sue DSHS

February 23, 2026, [Alexa Shrake](#), *The Texas Lawbook*

The parents of nine Camp Mystic campers and counselors who died in the July 4, 2025, flood filed a lawsuit Monday in the Western District of Texas against six officials of the Texas Department of State Health Services, alleging violations of their daughters' constitutional rights to life and bodily integrity.

“The DSHS officials responsible for licensing youth camps deliberately looked the other way,” [Paul Yetter](#) of Yetter Coleman said in a news release. “While Camp Mystic bears responsibility and is also being sued, state officials knew the camp’s emergency plan lacked a required evacuation component and still licensed it as safe.”

The plaintiffs’ deceased daughters are Lila Bonner, Molly DeWitt, Lainey Landry, Blakely McCrory, Margaret Bellows, Chloe Childress, Katherine Ferruzzo, Sarah Marsh and Mary Kate Jacobe.

The defendants include DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford and five other agency officials involved in camp oversight and inspection.

The lawsuit claims DSHS licensed Camp Mystic despite its failure to comply with state law requiring youth camps to maintain a written and posted evacuation plan for each building. Instead, the camp’s emergency instructions directed campers to remain in their cabins during a flood — including cabins located in designated flood zones along the Guadalupe River.

According to the complaint, DSHS inspected and licensed the nearly century-old camp annually, including two days before the flood that killed 27 campers and counselors.

The suit alleges officials knowingly licensed the camp despite the absence of a legally required evacuation plan.

By failing to enforce state safety laws, the plaintiffs argue, these DSHS officials “consciously and recklessly” endangered the children the laws were designed to protect, violating their constitutional rights.

Camp Mystic's license has not been revoked. It remains valid through March 6, 2026, and the camp has announced plans to reopen this summer.

"It remains to be seen whether they will continue to disregard state law and renew Camp Mystic's license to operate, putting more girls' lives at risk," the lawsuit reads.

The plaintiffs are seeking a jury trial along with compensatory damages and attorney fees.

"What we want to do is hold, not only the camp owners accountable, but also the state inspection officials who clearly neglected their duty and approved this evacuation instruction, which essentially was 'don't evacuate,'" Richard Mithoff told *The Texas Lawbook*.

Other lawsuits have been filed in [Travis County](#) and [Kerr County](#) district courts against Camp Mystic, alleging negligence and liability.

[Justin Tschoepe](#), [J. Reid Simpson](#) and [Shannon N. Smith](#) of Yetter Coleman, Richard Warren Mithoff and Warner Hocker of Mithoff Law, Lamont A. Jefferson and Emma Cano of Jefferson Cano, and John W. Stevenson and W. Robert Hand of Stevenson & Murray are representing the plaintiffs.

Counsel for the defendants have not filed appearances at this time. A judge has not been assigned to the case at this time.

The case number is 1:26-cv-00413.