

How Are Non-Economic Losses Proven In Georgia Wrongful Death Trials?

Can Juries Put A Number On A Life When There's No Receipt For Love And Guidance?

When a [wrongful death lawsuit](#) reaches the courtroom, the defense often wants the case to feel like a math problem. They'll talk about the details of what the deceased should or should not have done, and liability. But for the family, the loss isn't measured in do's and don'ts. It's measured in the empty seat at the table, the missing voice on the phone, and the person who never walks back through the door.

At [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our Georgia wrongful death lawyers know that the non-economic side of the "full value" of a life is where a jury has to see the human truth clearly. That doesn't happen through slogans. It happens through evidence, storytelling that stays grounded in facts, and witnesses who can show who your loved one was, how they lived, and what the loss really means in everyday life.

What Does Georgia Mean By The "Full Value" Of A Life Beyond Paychecks?

[Georgia wrongful death law](#) measures damages as the "full value of the life of the decedent," and the statute makes clear that value is shown by evidence and isn't reduced by the person's necessary personal expenses. In real trials, that "full value" is usually understood as having two parts that run together.

One part is economic value, like expected earnings and services. The other part is the intangible value of life, the part that can't be captured by a W-2. It's the value of being alive, from the decedent's perspective, with all the relationships, experiences, and meaning that came with it.

That's why non-economic proof matters so much. It gives the jury a real-world way to understand what the defense is trying to flatten into a sterile number.

Can A Family Sue For Grief In A Georgia Wrongful Death Case?

A lot of families are surprised by this, so it's worth saying plainly. In [Georgia](#), a wrongful death claim isn't designed to [compensate survivors](#) for their grief, sorrow, or emotional distress in the way some other states allow. The focus is the value of the decedent's life, not the family's heartbreak.

That doesn't mean the jury can't hear truthful testimony about the relationship and the role your loved one played. It means the proof has to stay tied to the decedent's life and what made it meaningful, not a request for sympathy or a tally of the family's pain.

And in many wrongful death cases, there may also be an [estate claim](#) that addresses different losses (like the decedent's pre-death pain and suffering, medical expenses, and other damages). That's a separate track, with different proof, and it can change how the overall story is presented at trial.

Who Usually Tells The Story Of The Relationship And The Loss At Trial?

In a strong wrongful death trial, the story doesn't come from one witness giving a perfect speech. It comes from multiple viewpoints that fit together like a quilt, each piece showing something real and consistent.

The people who can help build that picture often include:

- **A Spouse Or Partner:** The day-to-day life, shared responsibilities, routines, and the way the decedent showed up as a spouse and parent.
- **Children:** Age-appropriate testimony about guidance, involvement, consistency, and the decedent's role in their lives.
- **Close Friends:** Habits, character, plans, traditions, and the way the decedent invested in relationships.
- **Coworkers Or Business Partners:** Work ethic, leadership, mentorship, pride in work, and future plans that were already in motion.
- **Faith Or Community Leaders:** Service, volunteer work, and the decedent's place in the community.
- **Coaches, Teachers, Or Mentors:** If the decedent coached, mentored, or supported others, those details can show purpose and impact.

What matters most is that the testimony isn't vague. "They were amazing" doesn't help a jury the way "he never missed a Friday pickup, coached two seasons a year, and handled homework every night while dinner was cooking" helps.

What Evidence Makes Relationship Testimony Strong Instead Of Generic?

[Insurance defense lawyers](#) love to argue that the non-economic value is "subjective," like it's untouchable or unprovable. The best way to neutralize that is to make the proof specific and consistent.

Records and real-life details often matter more than people expect:

- **Text Messages And Call Logs:** Not to invade privacy, but to show patterns of connection, caregiving, planning, and involvement.
- **Calendars And Photos With Context:** A photo matters more when someone can explain what it shows and why it mattered.

- **School And Activity Records:** Attendance at games, practices, meetings, and routines that show guidance and presence.
- **Travel Plans, Goals, And Long-Term Projects:** Evidence that the decedent was actively living, building, and planning.
- **Statements From Neutral Witnesses:** People without a financial stake, like coworkers or community members, can sometimes land with extra weight.

A jury's job is to evaluate credibility. When multiple sources point to the same truth, the defense's "they're exaggerating" theme tends to collapse.

How Does Day-In-The-Life Evidence Work When The Person Is Gone?

"Day-in-the-life" evidence is usually associated with catastrophic injury cases, but pieces of that concept can still be powerful in a wrongful death trial, if it's used the right way.

The goal isn't to create a highlight reel. The goal is to help jurors understand the decedent as a real person with habits, responsibilities, and relationships. That might include:

- Short video clips that show routine moments (a morning ritual, coaching a team, family dinners).
- Photos tied to testimony that explains the decedent's role and consistency.
- Evidence of what the decedent did for others, like caregiving for an aging parent or daily involvement with children.

Used carefully, this kind of proof helps jurors see life as it was actually lived, not as a summary paragraph. It also keeps the focus where Georgia law puts it: on the value of the decedent's life, supported by evidence.

What Are Juries Really Listening For When They Hear About Care And Guidance?

Jurors don't need a family to "perform grief." They need clarity. They're listening for answers to questions they may never say out loud:

- *Who was this person to the people around them?*
- *How did they spend their time?*
- *What did they give to others that can't be replaced?*
- *What kind of future did they appear to be living into?*

Care, companionship, and guidance are proven through patterns. A single grand gesture is nice, but a pattern is persuasive.

Examples that often land because they're concrete:

- Helping kids learn to drive, showing up for teacher conferences, setting routines.

- Coaching, mentoring, or being the person others relied on.
- Handling the unglamorous parts of life, like medical appointments, budgeting, and caregiving.
- Being the consistent center of a household, the person who steadied everything.

Those details don't ask a jury for pity. They show value.

How Do Defense Teams Try To Downplay The Non-Economic Value Of A Life?

In wrongful death trials, the defense playbook often includes themes designed to reduce the decedent to a statistic.

Common strategies include:

- **Minimizing The Relationship:** Suggesting the family wasn't that close, or that involvement was "normal" and therefore not valuable.
- **Putting On Blinders To Focus On One Bad Moment:** Using one argument, one social media post, or one rough patch to paint a distorted picture.
- **Turning The Case Into Numbers Only:** Arguing that the "real" value is wages, and everything else is guesswork.
- **Quietly Pushing For A Sympathy Backlash:** Hinting that emotional testimony is manipulation, so jurors should "stay rational."

The response isn't to get louder. It's to get clearer. Consistent testimony, real records, and a story that stays tied to the decedent's lived reality makes those tactics look like what they are.

When Does The Estate Claim Change What's Presented To The Jury?

This is where many families get blindsided. A wrongful death claim focuses on the full value of the decedent's life. An estate claim can include different categories, like medical bills, [funeral and burial expenses](#) in some contexts, and the decedent's pain and suffering if there was survival time between injury and death.

That matters for proof.

If there was a period of medical treatment, the evidence may also include:

- Medical records and timeline evidence.
- Witness testimony about what the decedent experienced.
- Treatment decisions and the reality of the final days or hours.

Handled the right way, this doesn't distract from the wrongful death story. It completes it, and it can prevent the defense from pretending the death was "instant" when the evidence says otherwise.

How Can Families Prepare For Testimony Without Feeling Put On Trial?

Most families worry they'll say the wrong thing, break down on the stand, or get baited into an argument. Those fears are perfectly normal, and understandable. A courtroom can feel cold, even when jurors are listening with care.

What helps is preparation that focuses on truth and clarity, not "performance":

- Keep answers grounded in real examples and routines.
- Don't guess. If you don't know, it's okay to say you don't know.
- Expect questions that feel personal. The defense may push there because they don't want the jury focused on wrongdoing.
- Stay consistent with what the documents show, because the defense will use records to challenge memory.

The strongest testimony usually sounds ordinary, because real love and guidance are often built through ordinary days repeated over years.

Georgia's Billion Dollar Wrongful Death Lawyers Help Families Tell The Full Story At Trial

A wrongful death trial isn't just a [battle over liability](#). It's a battle over meaning. The defense will try to narrow your loved one's life into the smallest version of itself, because smaller stories lead to smaller numbers.

At Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C., our Georgia wrongful death attorneys know how to build non-economic proof that's credible, human, and supported by real evidence. If your family is facing a wrongful death case and the insurer is already working to discount the "full value" of your loved one's life, we're ready to step in, protect the story, and pursue the compensation Georgia law allows. For more information about your options, [contact us today](#) for a free consultation.