Victims

Teen Sentence

Parents of Michigan School Shooter Sentenced to 10 to 15 Years in Prison

Jennifer and James Crumbley, whose son killed four people, each faced up to 15 years in prison for involuntary manslaughter convictions.

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Jennifer Crumbley and her husband James in court during their sentencing on Tuesday. Bill Pugliano/Getty Images

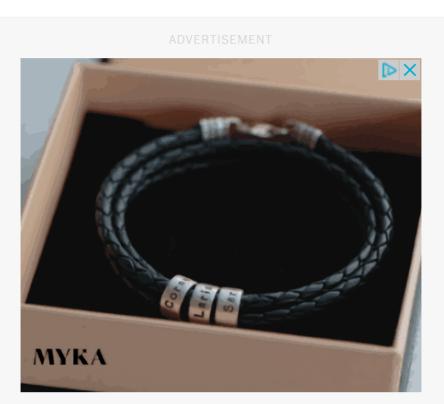
By Jacey Fortin and Anna Betts April 9, 2024 Updated 3:34 p.m. ET

Jennifer and James Crumbley, who were convicted of involuntary manslaughter for failing to prevent their teenage son from killing four fellow students in the deadliest school shooting in Michigan's history, were each sentenced on Tuesday to 10 to 15 years in prison.

Their separate jury trials ended in guilty verdicts in <u>February</u> and <u>March</u>, making them the first parents in the country to be convicted over the deaths caused by their child in a mass shooting.

Involuntary manslaughter charges carry a penalty in Michigan of up to 15 years in prison, and prosecutors asked in sentencing memos filed to the court last week that the Crumbleys each serve at least 10 years. Both have been in jail for more than two years while awaiting trial and will receive credit for time served.

"Parents are not expected to be psychic," Judge Cheryl Matthews of the Oakland County Circuit Court in Pontiac, Mich., said before issuing the sentence. "But these convictions are not about poor parenting. These convictions confirm repeated acts or lack of acts that could have halted an oncoming runaway train — repeatedly ignoring things that would make a reasonable person feel the hair on the back of her neck stand up."



Before the hearing, prosecutors said that Ms. Crumbley, 46, was asking to be sentenced to house arrest on her defense lawyer's property, rather than serving prison time. And Mr. Crumbley, 47, said that he had been wrongly convicted and his sentence should amount to the time he had already served in prison, adding that he felt "absolutely horrible" about what had happened.

On Tuesday, each of them spoke in the hearing before the judge pronounced sentence.

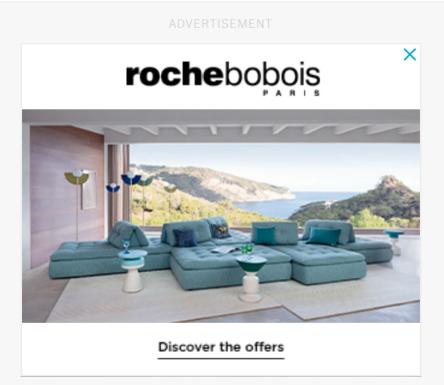
"I stand today not to ask for your forgiveness, as I know it may be beyond reach, but to express my sincerest apologies for the pain that has been caused," Ms. Crumbley said in court, addressing the relatives of students who were killed.

Michigan School Shooting: What to Know

An episode of deadly violence. A gunman opened fire at Oxford High School in Oakland County, Mich., on Nov. 30, 2021, shooting 11 people. Four students were killed and several others were seriously injured. Ethan Crumbley, a 15-year-old student, was later arrested in connection with the shooting. The via the aut Hana S and Tar squad fourth next m studen

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Mr. Crumbley also apologized. "I cannot express how much I wish that I had known what was going on with him or what was going to happen, because I absolutely would have done a lot of things differently," he said.



Relatives of some of the victims also spoke during the hearing, describing the overwhelming effects the shooting had on their lives.



Craig Shilling, father of Justin Shilling, one of the four Oxford High School students who were killed by Ethan Crumbley, spoke at the sentencing of the gunman's parents on Tuesday. Bill Pugliano/Getty Images

"The ripple effects of both James's and Jennifer's failures to act have devastated us all," said Jill Soave, the mother of Justin Shilling, 17, who was killed in the shooting at Oxford High School on Nov. 30, 2021. "This tragedy was completely preventable. If only they had done something, your honor, anything, to shift the course events on Nov. 30, then our four angels would be here today."

Steve St. Juliana, whose daughter, Hana, 14, was killed, said that the Crumbleys continued to fail to take responsibility for what had happened.

"They chose to stay quiet," he said. "They chose to ignore the warning signs. And now, as we've heard through all of the objections, they continue to choose to blame everyone but themselves."

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The Crumbleys' son, Ethan, was 15 when he carried out the shooting that killed Justin and Hana, as well as Madisyn Baldwin, 17, and Tate Myre, 16. Seven others were injured. Ethan Crumbley pleaded guilty to 24 charges, including first-degree murder, and was sentenced last year to <u>life in prison without</u> <u>parole</u>. He is still eligible to appeal that decision. His parents may appeal, too.

In the trials of both parents, prosecutors focused in part on their failure to remove their son from school after he made a violent drawing on the morning of the shooting. It included a written plea for help.

They also emphasized Ethan's access to a handgun that Mr. Crumbley had purchased. And they said that Ms. Crumbley had missed signs that her son was struggling with his mental health, adding that she took him to a gun range just days before the shooting.

Defense lawyers for both parents said they could not have foreseen the unspeakable violence their son would commit.



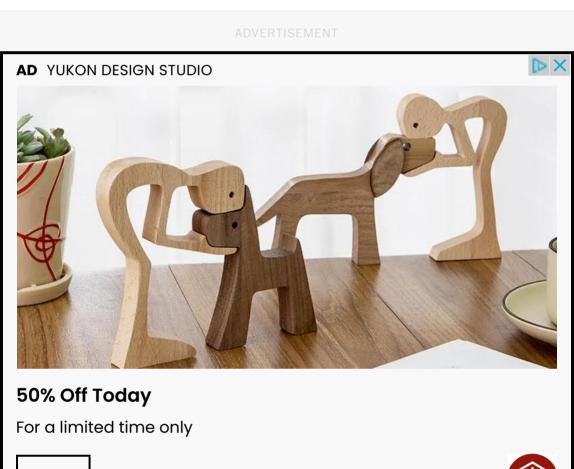
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Their trials became a lightning rod for issues of parental responsibility at a time of high-profile gun violence by minors. In recent months, parents in other states have pleaded guilty to charges of <u>reckless conduct</u> or <u>neglect</u> after their children injured or killed others with guns.

But the manslaughter charges against the Crumbleys were unique, and legal experts said their trials <u>could serve as a playbook</u> for other prosecutors who seek to hold parents accountable in the future.

Ekow Yankah, a professor at the University of Michigan Law School, said the effect of the ruling on Tuesday might be felt beyond the state.

"This is going to be precedent, most obviously in Michigan and its home jurisdiction, but prosecutors all over the country will see this as a new and viable form of liability," Mr. Yankah said. "I think we should not underestimate the precedential power of this case, even as we recognize that the facts were quite extraordinary."



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For Matthew Schneider, a former United States attorney in Michigan, what makes this case so different from many others is that most criminal sentences are related to the actions of a defendant, rather than being "about inactions, and how the inactions of a person result in a criminal sentence."

The sentencing is "very much about making an example of the defendants," Mr. Schneider said. "This is a shot across the bow to all parents, to all people who have firearms in their house, to keep them locked up, if they could be in the hands of the wrong people."

Jacey Fortin covers a wide range of subjects for the National desk of The Times, including extreme weather, court cases and state politics all across the country. More about Jacey Fortin

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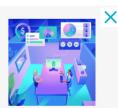


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