Ariel Payan

I have been working in the criminal law field for 28 years.  I started my career at the Court of Criminal Appeals as a briefing attorney, then staff attorney doing capital litigation, and writs / PDR’s.  I left the Court to open a defense practice in central Texas in 1998.

I was an adjunct professor at UT Law School for approximately 12 years, teaching trial advocacy, as well as coaching one of the travel team mock trial programs. As a solo practitioner I have handled appellate and trial work, including death penalty appeals and trials.  My practice focused primarily on felonies and has revolved around capital litigation in its many forms.

I have spent a significant amount of time on science and technology issues in my practice, focusing on computers, cell phones and DNA.  I have handled cases involving RFLP, MiniFiler, Y-STR, Mitochondrial, and STRmix.  I was lead attorney on one of the first STRmix cases in Texas.  Meechaiel Criner case (UT coed case).  In that case we successfully excluded STRmix results pretrial.

In 2020 I was honored to receive the Warren Burnett Award from the State Bar of Texas.

I have been a frequent lecturer on DNA issues both in Austin and Texas at large.

As of June 1, 2021, I am the Director of Legal Services for the Capital Area Private Defender Services (CAPDS), which is the organization that appoints attorneys to represent indigent people accused of crimes in Travis County Texas.