



CHAIR:  
Honorable Missy Medary  
Corpus Christi, Presiding Judge,  
5th Administrative  
Judicial Region of Texas

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:  
Honorable Brandon Creighton  
Honorable William W. "Bill" Gravell, Jr.  
Honorable Nathan Hecht  
Honorable Sharon Keller  
Honorable Emily Miskel  
Honorable Joseph "Joe" Moody  
Honorable Reggie Smith

MEMBERS APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR:  
Mr. James D. "Jim" Bethke  
Mr. Alex Bunin  
Mr. Jay Cohen  
Honorable Valerie Covey  
Honorable Richard Evans  
Honorable Missy Medary  
Honorable James R. "J.R." Woolley, Jr.

## Report from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) for the September 27, 2024 Texas Judicial Council Meeting

### *Introduction*

This report primarily covers TIDC's work from April 1, 2024 — August 31, 2024. If you would like additional information, please contact Executive Director **Scott Ehlers**: (512) 936-6994 or [SEhlers@TIDC.Texas.Gov](mailto:SEhlers@TIDC.Texas.Gov).

### *TIDC Board and Committee Meetings*

The TIDC Full Board met on [April 5](#) in Austin to discuss recommendations from the Policies and Standards (P&S) Committee, approve recommendations from the Salary Workgroup, and for updates from the Improvement, Family Protection Representation, Grants, and Research Teams. The Full Board met on June 24 to discuss TIDC's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). The TIDC Grants and Reporting (G&R) Committee met on [June 24](#) to consider grant applications and grant modification requests. The TIDC Full Board met on [June 28](#) to select Judge **Missy Medary** as TIDC's new

Chair, decide on TIDC's LAR, and to consider recommendations from the G&R Committee. The P&S Committee met on [August 19](#) for updates and recommendations on the ongoing Dallas County Policy Monitoring and to discuss Legislative Proposals for the 89th Texas Legislature. The TIDC Full Board met on [August 29](#) in Austin to award **Judge Roy**



*TIDC Board members and staff during the August 29 Board Meeting.*

**B. Ferguson** of the 394<sup>th</sup> District Court the Robert O. Dawson Indigent Defense Distinguished Service Award, consider and approve legislative recommendations from the P&S Committee, decide on pending Improvement Grant applications, and approve its FY2025 budget. [Read full press release here.](#) The next TIDC Full Board meeting will be on December 6, 2024 in Austin.



*(l-r): Lori Holguin, 394<sup>th</sup> Dist. Ct. Coordinator; 394<sup>th</sup> Dist. Judge Roy B. Ferguson with Dawson Award; James McDermott, Chief, Far West Texas Regional Public Defender; Paul Chambers, Assistant Public Defender, Far West Texas Regional Public Defender.*

In May, Governor **Greg Abbott** [appointed](#) **James “Jim” Bethke** and Judge **James R. “J.R.” Woolley** to the Governing Board of the Texas Indigent

Defense Commission. Jim Bethke of Austin is the executive director of the Bexar County Managed Assigned Counsel Office; his term expires February 1, 2026. Judge J.R. Woolley of Waller is a justice of the peace for Waller County; his term expires February 1, 2025. Additionally, the Governor reappointed Commissioner **Valerie Covey**, Judge **Richard Evans**, and Judge **Missy Medary** for terms set to expire on February 1, 2026. In early September, Governor **Greg Abbott** [appointed](#) Judge **William “Bill” Gravell, Jr.** and Justice **Emily Miskel** to the Indigent Defense Commission Governing Board as ex-officio members. Judge Bill Gravell, Jr. of Georgetown is the Williamson County Judge. Justice Emily Miskel of McKinney is on the Fifth Court of Appeals.

### ***Staff Update***

In addition to its normal monitoring, grants administration, and data collection, TIDC staff has been involved in the following:

- TIDC welcomed Senior Policy Analyst, **Kenitra Brown**, in May. Kenitra comes to TIDC from the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center at SMU’s Dedman School of Law. Prior to that, she spent several years in private practice, working on criminal, civil, family representation, and post-conviction matters.

- TIDC welcomed Fiscal Analyst, **Will Jones** in August. Will has over 12 years of experience in the auditing field and specializes in single audits and fiscal audits. He is passionate about helping organizations navigate complex audit processes and maintain strong financial oversight.
- TIDC's summer interns were **James Comer, Audrey Dixon, Natalie Essex, Emma Hoffman, Jordan Murley, and Kyler Smith.**
- TIDC Board Member, **Jim Bethke** was awarded the [Warren Burnett Award](#) in June. The award is named for the late legendary Texas Attorney **Warren Burnett**. The award recognizes extraordinary contributions to improving the quality of criminal legal representation to indigent Texans. The award honors either an individual or organization for their work in the courtroom, legislature, or in the public space.
- Throughout June and July, TIDC staff hosted sub-workgroups on various indigent defense and family representation legislative matters as part of TIDC's longstanding legislative workgroup process. TIDC makes recommendations to the Legislature for statutory changes to improve the indigent defense and family protection representation systems, pursuant to Gov't Code 79.035(b)(2)(D). The second full meetings of TIDC's Legislative Workgroups were held on August 1 (Family Protection Representation) and August 6 (Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency).
- TIDC submitted its [FY26-27 Legislative Appropriations Request](#) on August 16.
- TIDC issued its [Family Protection Representation 2023 Data Report](#) in August.



*(l-r): Shannon Evans, Center for American & Int'l Law; TIDC Board Member Jim Bethke; Ct. Crim. App. Presiding Judge Sharon Keller; TIDC Executive Director Scott Ehlers.*



*TIDC staff on a policy and fiscal monitoring visit to Denton County in July. Associate Criminal Judge Robin Ramsay and court staff are pictured as well.*

including the Juvenile Defense Training Immersion Program with Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (TCDLA) and National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC), a presentation on Family Protection Representation at Baylor Law School’s Professional Development Program, a presentation to Justices of the Peace at the [Justice Court Training Center](#) about appointment of counsel, the [UT Law Children’s Rights Clinic](#), the Indigent Defense Coordinators (IDC) Meet-up on May 21 to discuss how automation tools aid with counsel requests and defendant complaints in Amarillo, the Public Defense Leaders Training on June 11, the Indigent Defense Seminar on June 12 as part of TCDLA’s [37th Annual Rusty Duncan Advanced Criminal Law Course](#) in San Antonio, the [SMU Dedman School of Law Rising Scholars Event](#), a panel titled *Justice for All: Voices from the Public Service Front* at

- TIDC issued the final fiscal monitoring report for [Upshur](#) County.

- TIDC staff traveled to Childress, Dallam, Dawson, Deaf Smith, Denton, Hartley, Hill, Limestone, McLennan, Montgomery, Rusk, Sabine, and San Augustine Counties for fiscal or policy monitoring visits.

- TIDC staff hosted and presented at several workshops and trainings,



*(l-r): Robynn Fletcher, Williamson County Attorney’s Office; Kellie Price, Department of Family & Protective Services & Treasurer of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section; Crystal Leff-Piñon, TIDC Director of Family Protection Representation; Judge Bill Harris, Lamar County Court at Law & Chair of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section.*

the Personal Development Day for St. Mary's School of Law online student section, the Advanced Family Law Child Abuse & Neglect Workshop in San Antonio, the Texas Justice Court Training Center's Magistration Workshop in Odessa, and the Fitness to Proceed Curriculum Workgroup.

- TIDC staff attended regularly held meetings this quarter, including the State Bar's Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Committee meeting, the Regional Public Defender Office for Capital Cases Board meeting, and the Children's Commission meetings.

### ***Indigent Defense in the Media, Reports, and Resources***

The included public defense articles are for informational purposes and do not constitute TIDC's endorsement of a group or its views.

[ACLU Sues Demanding Attorneys Be Present at Initial Bail Hearings](#) (April)

[New public defender will begin his new role in April](#) (April)

[Dallas County infighting keeps defendants from having attorney at first court hearing](#) (April)

[His mother got him out of jail but his lawyer got paid? Harris County's court-appointed lawyer system is broken. | Editorial](#) (June)

[Judge Missy Medary sworn in for another term on Texas Indigent Defense Commission](#) (June)

[Two-Thirds Of Public Defenders Office Clients Back In Community](#) (June)

[El Paso County issues disaster declaration to recover rising Operation Lone Star expenses](#) (July)

[Abe Krash, Who Fought for a Constitutional Right to Counsel Dies, at 97](#) (July)

[SMU Deason Center's tireless warrior holds feet to the fire when it comes to public defense](#) (July)

[Library to Host Discussion of Possibility of a Public Defender Office in County](#) (August)