



TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION
209 W. 14th St., Room 202, Austin, Texas 78701
512-936-6994

**For Immediate Release
March 21, 2013**

**Contact: Terri Tuttle
512-936-6994**

Burnet County Awarded the Texas Gideon Recognition for Improvements in Indigent Defense

AUSTIN – The Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) today awarded the Texas Gideon Recognition to Burnet County for their outstanding commitment to improvements in indigent defense. The creation of the Burnet County Public Defender Office, together with other process improvements in the Burnet County justice system, have elevated the quality of justice available to the poor, provided high-quality indigent defense services with oversight and accountability, and saved taxpayer dollars with a more effective system of public defense. Burnet County Judge Donna Klaeger, County Attorney Eddie Arredondo and Chief Public Defender Michelle Moore accepted the award for Burnet County at the Commission’s meeting in Austin.

The Burnet County Public Defender Office opened in December 2011 with the help of a grant from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission. The public defender has worked closely with Burnet County’s magistrate judge to streamline processes to ensure that poor defendants have access to counsel early in the process. Caseload standards have been put in place and monitored, and well-trained and highly qualified attorneys staff the office. The public defender has also spearheaded the use of videoconferencing technology and has effectively worked with the magistrate to get help to mentally ill defendants quickly.

“Burnet County’s successful innovations have made real and valuable improvements to indigent defense and the overall criminal justice system,” said TIDC Chair Judge Sharon Keller. “Their public defender helps to ensure effective representation through oversight, accountability, and standards development, all while monitoring compliance with the Fair Defense Act and at substantial savings to taxpayers compared with the previous system.”

About the Gideon Recognition Program: March 18th of this year marked the 50th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright* affirming the right to an attorney for poor defendants. The Texas Indigent Defense Commission established the Texas Gideon Recognition Program to commend local governments that demonstrate a strong commitment to indigent defense and develop programs that meet a high standard of performance. More information is available at

http://www.txcourts.gov/tidc/pdf/GideonRecognition_forweb.pdf

###