



TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION

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Commission Approves Disbursement of \$37 Million to Counties, Presents Gideon Recognition for Montgomery County Juvenile Program

AUSTIN – The Texas Indigent Defense Commission voted today to disburse \$37 million in formula grant funding to Texas counties to help them ensure that all Texans can access constitutionally required legal defense services. In addition to scheduling the regular quarterly payments over the fiscal year totaling \$22 million, most counties will receive a special one-time formula grant payment disbursing the \$15 million that accumulated in the Fair Defense Account but which the legislature had not previously appropriated in the 2012-2013 budget.

“The Commission appreciates the efforts of our state’s leadership, the counties and many other stakeholders to produce a budget that once again ensures that state funds collected specifically for indigent defense are available for that purpose,” said Commission Chair Sharon Keller.

Counties are eligible to receive formula grants based on their compliance with the central requirements of the Fair Defense Act. The amount of a county’s formula grant is calculated based on a combination of population and indigent defense expenditures.

The Commission also presented the Gideon Award to a delegation from Montgomery County recognizing the positive impact of the county’s new indigent defense program for juvenile defendants, which is staffed by experienced attorneys who are all Board Certified in Juvenile Law. According to local officials, the Contract Defender attorneys have been innovative in suggesting and utilizing using varied approaches and/or alternatives to the detention of juveniles. The Juvenile Prosecutors and Judge have been willing to consider and utilize these alternatives. As a result of this approach, according to an internal examination of data, the number of juveniles in detention has been reduced, and the number of days juveniles spend in detention has been reduced.

Finally, the Commission officially welcomed its two newest members. Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court Nathan Hecht and Hays County Court-at-Law Judge Linda Rodriguez both took the oath of office as they commence their service on the Commission.

The mission of the Texas Indigent Defense Commission is to provide financial and technical support to counties to develop and maintain quality, cost-effective indigent defense systems that meet the needs of local communities and the requirements of Constitution and state law. More information is available on the Commission’s website at <http://www.txcourts.gov/tidc/>.

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