

TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE

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TASK FORCE AWARDS \$21 MILLION IN FUNDING TO 99 COUNTIES AND FUNDS 5 NEW PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENT DEFENSE

AUSTIN –The Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense today voted to award more than \$21 million through two programs to help Texas counties improve their indigent defense efforts. Over 90 counties were awarded funds totaling \$8 million to help offset increased indigent defense costs. In addition, five counties were awarded discretionary funding to establish new indigent defense offices or procedures, along with continued funding in eight counties.

Newly funded programs include a public defender's office in **Burnet** County that will provide direct representation to the poor in multiple counties and a managed assigned counsel program in **Lubbock** County. This model was piloted through a specialized mental health defense program, and **Lubbock** County will use the grant to serve all indigent defendants countywide.

Additional improvements to indigent defense processes will be made through Task Force-funded programs in **Bell, Cameron** and **Uvalde** Counties.

The Task Force has distributed funds since 2002 to help counties meet the statutory and constitutional requirements to provide access to counsel for the poor. The new programs are set to begin on October 1, 2011.

The specific programs approved for new funding today are:

Bell County: Awarded \$285,000 to create a comprehensive system of training, mentoring and evaluation for attorneys who accept court appointments to represent indigent defendants.

Burnet County: Awarded \$597,972 for the Central Texas Regional Public Defender Office. The county will host a public defender initiative that will serve several counties in the area.

Cameron County: Awarded \$82,000 to implement the indigent defense components of a direct filing system.

Lubbock County: Awarded \$320,000 to create the Lubbock County Managed Assigned Counsel program—the first countywide system of its kind in Texas.

Uvalde County: Awarded \$67,920 to develop a regional system that utilizes videoconferencing equipment for magistrate hearings.

Continuing grants were awarded to public defenders' offices in **Bee, Bowie, Dickens, Fort Bend, Harris, Lubbock and Webb** Counties. Managed assigned counsel pilot programs in Lubbock and Montgomery counties were also awarded continued funding.

Other programs, including mental health initiatives in **Bell** and **Collin** Counties, a juvenile public defender unit in **Hidalgo** County and a technical support request in **Williamson** County, were granted extensions and will be taken up by the Task Force later this summer.

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