

## **TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE**

Post Office Box 12066  
Austin, Texas, 78711-2066

512-936-6994 (Voice)

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**Contact: James Bethke**  
512-936-6994

### **TASK FORCE ANNOUNCES INDIGENT DEFENSE GRANT AWARDS AND RELEASES STATEWIDE SPENDING ANALYSIS**

AUSTIN – The Task Force on Indigent Defense announced today the award of \$20 million in formula grant funds to Texas Counties to help improve attorney representation systems for the poor. Under the Constitution and Texas state law, each county is required to develop a system to provide attorneys to those who cannot afford to retain counsel. All counties are eligible to receive funds under the formula grant program if they submit their annual indigent defense expenditure report and biennially submit their indigent defense plans that meet the requirements of state law. Funds are awarded based on formulas that consider each county's population and the amount of increased expenditures since passage of the Fair Defense Act in 2001. The Task Force distributes grant funds to promote effective indigent defense practices through both formula and discretionary programs. Counties then use Task Force funds to improve systems by increasing the number of defendants who receive services from court appointed attorneys, providing prompt notification of rights to arrested individuals, or offsetting increased county costs.

“These grants provide much needed assistance for local jurisdictions dealing with increased indigent defense costs and support effective public defense representation in Texas” said Sharon Keller, the presiding judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and Task Force chair.

Across the state, both the number of cases that require appointed attorneys and the associated costs have increased. The Task Force's annual Indigent Defense Expenditure Report indicates that statewide indigent defense spending has grown to over \$193 million in FY2010. This represents a total increase in costs of 3.6% over FY2009 spending. Counties also reported appointing attorneys in 482,482 cases, an increase of 2.42%.

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