



TEXAS TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE

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TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE RELEASES REPORT ON THE TARRANT COUNTY INDIGENT DEFENSE SYSTEM

AUSTIN – The Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense released a report Friday that called the Tarrant County system potentially “one of the model assigned counsel systems in the state” for handling indigent criminal defendants.

The Task Force’s special counsel, Wesley Shackelford, who conducted the Tarrant County review at the county’s request, said a central magistrate operation for jail inmates were among significant improvements in how the county handled indigent defendants. “The county can take the next step by further consolidating the process of determining whether people are indigent and the system of making attorney appointments,” Shackelford said.

Judge George Gallagher, 396th District Court, said “The District Judges and County Judges handling criminal cases in Tarrant County are making every effort to cooperate with the Task Force on Indigent Defense to maximize our indigent defense services through innovative solutions while attempting to decrease the costs of such efforts to the taxpayers.”

Judge Bob Gill, 213th District Court, said “I want to thank the Task Force and Mr. Shackelford for conducting the site visit and preparing the Report. The feedback that we have received will enable us to make changes that will allow us to more effectively and efficiently provide indigent defense services.”

The report is based on a three-day visit to the county that included interviews judges, court staff and private defense lawyers and observations of hearings. The report makes detailed findings and recommendations to improve the delivery of indigent-defense services in Tarrant County.

The report is available on the Task Force’s web site, <http://www.courts.state.tx.us/oca/tfid/>.

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