

# DIGITAL COMMUNICATION



## SEAMLESS CLIENT COMMUNICATION

Ongoing, confidential client communication is critical to effective representation. But time and distance sometimes make it difficult for attorneys and clients to connect. New technologies—including videoconferencing, automated calling, and texting—are now making it easier for lawyers to communicate with their clients.

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### VIDEOCONFERENCING

There is no substitute for in-person client communication. But, especially in rural areas, frequent in-person communication can be challenging. TIDC has worked with several counties, including Taylor County most recently, to implement videoconferencing so that attorneys and incarcerated clients can talk regularly. This supplement to in-person communication saves time and money, while ensuring that client communication remains a core part of defense representation.

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#### **TIDC funds indigent defense innovation in Texas counties.**

Since 2003, TIDC has awarded discretionary grants to over 20 counties for videoconferencing technology that remotely connects attorneys, clients, and courts. Counties can apply for videoconferencing grants through a simplified “menu option.”

TIDC also provides funding for software development and other technology projects that improve indigent defense.

## MODEL PROGRAM: CONTRA COSTA PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Proceedings in Contra Costa County, California were routinely delayed by defendants missing court dates: nearly 57% of defendants cited and released failed to appear (FTA) at their initial court dates. To help combat this problem, Contra Costa Public Defenders partnered with Uptrust, which provides two-way texting services to connect attorneys and clients. Anecdotally, offices that have switched to text reminders have seen FTA rates drop to 2.5%. A full study of the program is underway.

In another study, the University of Chicago Crime Lab found that simple text reminders in New York City reduced FTAs by 26%. Counties in Washington, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon have also used court reminders to lower FTA rates. Texas counties are now piloting similar programs.



Since 2003 TIDC has been awarding discretionary grants for **videoconferencing technology** that remotely connects attorneys, clients, and courts.



**Digital communication** instantly connects remote attorneys to clients which cuts down travel time, and helps courts and defense attorneys meet procedural timeliness requirements.

### TIDC INNOVATION SERIES

For more information on digital communication and other innovative practices, go to:

[tidc.texas.gov/innovation](http://tidc.texas.gov/innovation)

////// Or call us—you may qualify for grant funding:

512-936-6994