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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
December 18, 2019

### **TIDC Funds Public Defense Improvement**

AUSTIN – Last Friday, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) awarded over \$2 million in grants to improve mental health defender programs and announced a pilot program to monitor quality of representation.

Earlier this year, TIDC invited public defender offices across the State to apply for grant funding to hire specialized attorneys and support staff focused on representing defendants with mental health issues.

“All three branches of government have made mental health resources a priority,” said Geoff Burkhart, TIDC Executive Director. “We are pleased to expand our efforts in this area by targeting funds at programs that improve outcomes by addressing criminal charges in the context of often untreated mental health challenges.”

TIDC awarded a Mental Health Public Defender Improvement Grant to the following offices:

- **Bexar County Public Defender**, awarded \$699,821.
- **Far West Texas Regional Public Defender**, awarded \$139,623;
- **Dallas County Public Defender**, awarded \$587,784;
- **Harris County Public Defender**, awarded \$1,166,863;
- **Lavaca County Regional Public Defender**, awarded \$135,767.

TIDC also announced that, as part of its policy monitoring process, it would pilot new quality metrics regarding caseloads, jail visits, and investigation. Should the pilot prove beneficial, TIDC may incorporate these metrics as part of its regular policy monitoring process.

### **About TIDC**

The Texas Indigent Defense Commission provides 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 the Constitution and state law. More information is available at [www.tidc.texas.gov](http://www.tidc.texas.gov).