



Supplement to Taylor County Monitoring Report: Additional Observations on Attorney Qualifications

Part I. Performance Indicators

TIDC has historically monitored how counties admit attorneys to lists, but not how counties review their performance.¹ TIDC is piloting key performance indicators related to attorney representation—caseloads, investigation, and client contact—to assess counties’ procedures for ensuring effective and ethical representation. For this supplemental report, TIDC is relying on counties’ expenditure reports and indigent defense plans, interviews and surveys, and additional sources as available.

During this pilot period, the following observations about attorney performance are not policy monitoring findings and do not affect TIDC funding. No response is required, though TIDC welcomes feedback.

Since its passage, the Fair Defense Act has required local jurisdictions to review qualifications for attorneys on the appointment list. Under Article 26.04(b)(5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, counties must adopt procedures that

ensure that each attorney appointed from a public appointment list to represent an indigent defendant perform the attorney’s duty owed to the defendant in accordance with the adopted procedures, the requirements of this code, and applicable rules of ethics.

Performance Review

TIDC reviewed the indigent defense plan for Taylor, Callahan, and Coleman Counties’ District Courts and County Courts² and interviewed local officials and staff to learn about procedures for performance review. The plan lists the minimum qualifications for appointment lists, and states that attorneys must “professionally perform duties and responsibilities of a licensed attorney for the State of Texas” and “comply with all laws, rules, procedures, and ethical provisions for providing reasonable assistance of counsel to their client.” County and district court judges meet annually to review whether attorneys should stay on lists. In addition, if there are performance concerns that the presiding judge is unable to resolve informally, the judges meet to address those concerns. Judges can remove attorneys from lists, or take other

¹ Attorney qualifications for appointment lists are one of six core Fair Defense Act requirements that TIDC monitors. 1 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 174.28(c)(3).

² <http://tidc.tamu.edu/IDPlan/ViewPlan.aspx?PlanID=162>

disciplinary action, if they no longer meet the qualifications or fail to provide competent representation.

Caseloads

Attorneys need to spend enough time on each case to perform their basic duties.³ TIDC, in partnership with the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University, studied the maximum number of cases an attorney could handle in a year while providing ethical representation.⁴ The study found that, in Texas, a private attorney should dispose no more than 226 misdemeanors, 128 felonies, 31 appeals, or a weighted combination of these cases.

Taylor County does not have caseload limits. In FY2020:⁵

- About one-third (14 of 44) of attorneys who were paid for felony, misdemeanor, or appellate cases in Taylor County had statewide indigent defense caseloads above the Texas caseload guidelines.⁶
- Their median statewide indigent defense caseload was about 48% of the guidelines.
- Including non-indigent-defense cases, seven attorneys had total caseloads more than twice the guidelines, and 13 attorneys had caseloads over 1.5 times the guidelines.⁷
- Taylor County reported the ability to track attorney caseloads in its Odyssey system.
- Attorney survey responses regarding caseloads included:
 - Attorneys are “overburdened with lots of serious cases and [do] not have adequate time to work them”;
 - “Caseloads are not currently manageable because there are not enough lawyers willing to take on court appointed cases”; and
 - “My caseload is challenging but we are managing it.”
- During interviews with TIDC staff, judges were concerned with the shrinking number of attorneys accepting appointments on criminal cases, especially first-

³ TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.01. (see commentary: “A lawyer's workload should be controlled so that each matter can be handled with diligence and competence.”)

⁴ <http://tidc.texas.gov/caseloads>

⁵ <http://tidc.tamu.edu/Public.Net/Reports/AttorneyCaseLoad.aspx>

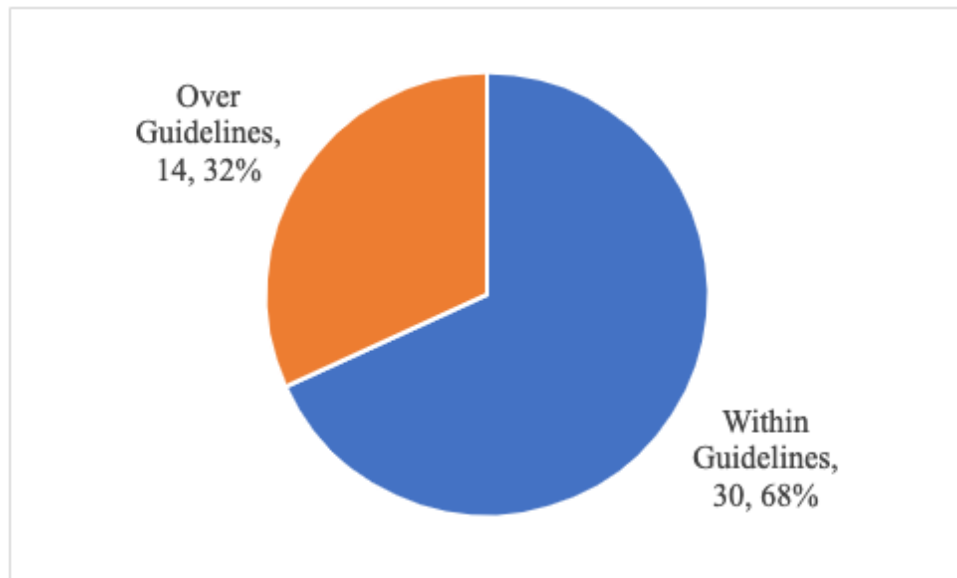
⁶ This estimate is from county auditor data, available at <http://tidc.tamu.edu/public.net/Reports/AttorneyCaseLoad.aspx>. This estimate does not include capital or juvenile indigent defense cases, civil appointments, or retained cases.

⁷ This estimate combines county auditor data with data from attorneys on the percent of their practice time dedicated to indigent defense. For this estimate, TIDC divides attorneys' statewide indigent defense caseload (excluding juvenile and capital cases) by their reported percent of practice time devoted to appointed criminal cases. During interviews with TIDC staff, judges and attorneys expressed concerns about attorney caseloads, especially on first and second degree cases.

and second-degree felonies. Attorneys told TIDC staff that there are too few attorneys willing to take appointments, and the caseloads of those appointed to serious cases are too high. They said flat fees, being paid less than the scheduled hourly rates, and reduced voucher payments are issues. During the TIDC's fiscal review, it was noted that almost half (29 of 49) of the attorney vouchers reviewed were not itemized, and almost 10% (4 of 49) were paid amounts that did not correspond to Taylor County's adopted fee schedule.

- Every year, the indigent defense coordinator prompts attorneys who are on an appointment list to submit practice time reports. However, when attorneys leave the appointment list, they often do not enter their practice time reports. In FY20, nine attorneys (13%) who were paid for Taylor County appointments did not file practice time reports for Taylor County.⁸

Taylor County FY20 Attorney Statewide Caseloads vs. Texas Guidelines⁹



Use of Investigators

Attorneys have a duty to investigate the facts of each case.¹⁰ That duty, regardless of the client's wish to admit guilt, includes determining whether the charges and sentence are factually and legally correct, and informing the client of potential defenses

⁸ The local plan requires attorneys to file these reports to stay on appointment lists. TEX. CODE OF CRIM. PROC. ART. 26.04(j)(4) also requires attorneys to file these reports. Attorneys may not have filed reports if they finished work in FY18 and were paid in FY19.

⁹ This chart reflects statewide appointments to attorneys taking Taylor County appointments.

¹⁰ TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.01.

to the charges.¹¹ Some investigation can be performed by attorneys.¹² Other investigation requires an investigator, because, for instance, attorneys cannot testify to facts that the attorney has investigated, or because of the need for added capacity or specialization. One response to the attorney survey focused on the challenge:

Ideally an investigator ought to be available for any case in which investigation must be undertaken. This is because defense counsel cannot both represent a defendant in trial and also when a witness changes his or her version of events to differ from that given pretrial then take the stand and testify in contradiction of the witness who has changed his or her version of events. More simply, defense counsel cannot be not a defense witness and serve as defense counsel.¹³

TIDC's caseload guidelines recommend that, on average, for misdemeanors, 5.3% of case time (28.5 minutes) is spent on investigator investigation and, for felonies, 7.7% (85.3 minutes).¹⁴

The Taylor County plan provides for payment for investigators but does not speak to when they should be used. The courts do not track attorneys' use of investigators. In FY2020:¹⁵

- Less than one percent of total misdemeanor expenditures (0.70%, \$300 of \$289,310, for 1,614 cases) were for investigators.
- Less than one percent of total felony expenditures (0.99%, \$37,051 of \$1,284,502, for 1,819 cases) were for investigators.
- 69% of attorneys practicing criminal law in Taylor County surveyed by TIDC responded they have not requested an investigator on a misdemeanor case in the last year, compared to felony cases, where 56% of attorneys requested an investigator one to ten times.
- A court staff member and an attorney indicated that investigators are not requested on misdemeanor cases.

TIDC interviews with attorneys highlighted concerns with:

¹¹ STATE BAR OF TEXAS PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES FOR NON-CAPITAL CRIMINAL DEFENSE REPRESENTATION GUIDELINE 4.1(A).

In some of the sample misdemeanor cases that entered pleas, defendants waived discovery. Article 39.14(k) of the Code of Criminal Procedure states:

If at any time before, during, or after trial the state discovers any additional document, item, or information required to be disclosed under Subsection (h), the state shall promptly disclose the existence of the document, item, or information to the defendant or the court.

¹² TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 3.08.

¹³ Indigent Defense Attorney Survey Results page 11, "What types of cases almost never require an investigator?"

¹⁴ These recommendations are for cases that do not go to trial. More investigation time is recommended for cases that go to trial.

¹⁵ <http://tidc.tamu.edu/public.net/Reports/CountyFinancialReport.aspx?cid=226&fy=2019>

- Lack of qualified local investigators;
- Requirements to obtain prior approval for investigations, which is generally given at \$500.00 at a time; and
- Judicial limits on types of work investigators can perform.

Client Contact

Attorneys have a duty to communicate with defendants about their case.¹⁶ Attorneys should be in regular contact, especially with clients who are in custody.¹⁷ They should also attempt to contact out-of-custody clients and discuss their cases out-of-court to ensure confidentiality¹⁸ and time to prepare.¹⁹ TIDC's caseload guidelines recommend that, on average, 13.9% (75 minutes) of misdemeanor case time and 16.1% (168.8 minutes) of felony case time is spent on client communication.²⁰

The Taylor County plan requires attorneys to contact clients by the first working day after appointment (as required by Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 26.04(j)(4)(1)) and timely inform clients of matters related to case preparation. In interviews, courts noted that they receive client complaints and sometimes must order attorneys to meet with their clients. However, courts do not track client communication, and no data was available to TIDC. Attorneys indicated to TIDC staff that they work to interview clients as quickly as possible; however, caseloads and COVID challenges often delay personal contact and interviews with clients to the third or fifth day. Additionally, it was reported that the requirement that video jail visits be scheduled one day in advance delays initial contact, and that some lawyers do not meet with clients until the day of court hearings. TIDC staff observed the courts have private meeting rooms for attorneys to consult with detained defendants. Taylor County uses a 'Jail Call' docket for detained individuals. Those for whom counsel has not been appointed previously are appointed a lawyer, often resulting in a guilty plea or time served.

During interviews with TIDC staff, several attorneys said that Taylor County needs quality controls in its indigent defense system, with some indicating a public defender system may be the best option to address challenges and draw more attorneys and investigators to the area.

¹⁶ TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.03. *See also* TEX. CODE CRIM. PROC. art. 26.04(j)(4)(1), requiring appointed attorneys to contact and interview clients as soon as practicable.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.05.

¹⁹ TEX. DISCIPLINARY RULES PROF'L CONDUCT R. 1.01.

²⁰ These recommendations are for cases that do not go to trial. More communication time is recommended for cases that go to trial.

Summary

The Taylor County courts are able to track attorneys' local caseloads but do not regularly review them or set caseload limits. The courts receive complaints about attorneys who do not meet with their clients and are challenged with a lack of attorneys who take court appointments. The courts do not have a method for tracking whether attorneys are investigating their cases or are utilizing licensed investigators when needed.

Part II. Indigent Defense Attorney Survey and Interview Results

In July 2021, with assistance from local courts, TIDC distributed an online survey to Taylor County indigent defense attorneys and received 16 responses. Respondents were self-selected and may not be representative of local views. Full responses are below, alphabetized and numbered. Notable observations included:

- **Oversight.** Most attorneys said there is adequate oversight.
- **Caseloads.** Attorneys reported too few attorneys taking too many cases due to low pay and vouchers being cut ("Taylor County has three choices: continue to wither the court-appointed criminal defense bar, or pay the promised hourly fee for time expended, or move to a Public Defender System").
- **Investigation.** 69% of attorneys said they have not requested an investigator for misdemeanor cases in the past year, and 56% reported requesting an investigator 1-10 times for felony cases. They reported low pay, lack of trained investigators, and some judges' misunderstanding of attorney duties as barriers to adequate investigation. ("Not all Judges in Taylor County recognize the attorney-witness conflict, to the peril of the defense").
- **Client Communication.** 88% of attorneys said they can "often" communicate effectively with clients and most reported visiting clients at the jail (14 of 16 respondents).
- **COVID-19 and Online Courts.** Attorneys had mixed reactions to online courts, finding them appropriate for some uncontested hearings but not for contested ones.
- **Payment Vouchers.** Half of attorneys (50%) said they do not bill for out-of-court time on misdemeanors. Some stated that they are not compensated for out-of-court time.
- **Taylor County.** Attorneys praised the indigent defense coordinator. They recommended increasing the number of attorneys who take appointments by increasing pay for attorneys, expanding access to investigators, or creating a public defender office.

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Taylor County

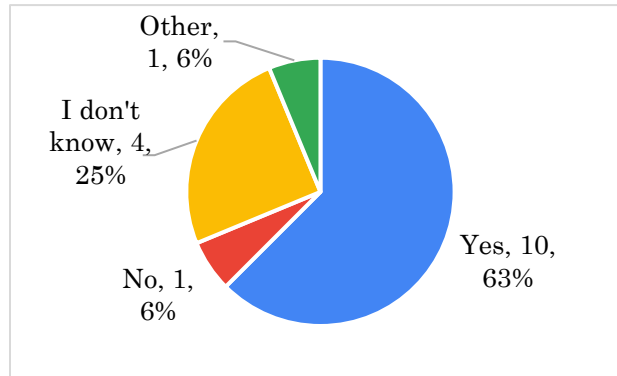
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Oversight

1. Is there adequate oversight of appointed attorneys in Taylor County?

[Provided answers: Yes; No; I don't know; Other]



“OTHER” RESPONSES LISTED ALPHABETICALLY:

- Probably not, although it is unclear that another level of bureaucracy would fix anything. Judges cannot perform that function.

2. If you have other comments on oversight, please share them here:

	Responses listed alphabetically:
	I believe Taylor County should move to a public defender system. The quality of court appointed representation is not good, and no one is there to give oversight to the attorneys who take court appointments to ensure a proper job is being done.
	The Indigent Defense Coordinator immediately brings to attention attorney oversight.

Caseloads

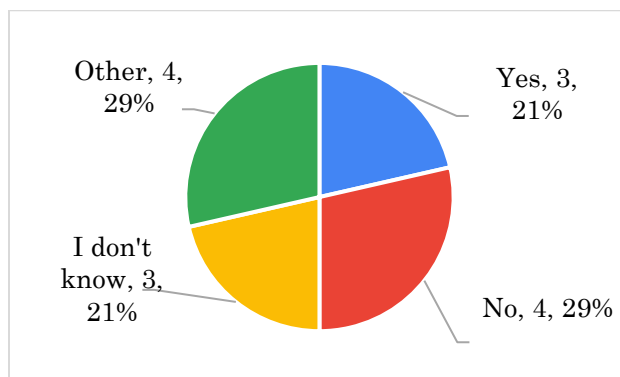
3. What types of work do you do beside indigent defense, if any?

	Responses listed alphabetically:
	A minimal amount of probate/guardianship/mental health
	child welfare, guardianship, military
	CPS and probate
	CPS Cases representing parents
	criminal defense
	Criminal defense, family law
	Criminal matters
	Criminal, family, civil litigation, transactional
	Criminal, PI, general civil
	Lots of retained case-work. Indigent defense work is a very small fraction of my case-load
	none

•	Private hire criminal cases.
•	Retained criminal defense
•	Retained criminal defense, bankruptcy, social security disability, wills and probate, family
•	retained criminal, personal injury, retained appeals, retained post conviction writ work

4. Do attorneys taking appointments in Taylor County have manageable caseloads?

[Provided answers: Yes; No; I don't know; Other]



	“Other” responses listed alphabetically:
•	I can only speak for myself
•	I can't speak for others.
•	If the lawyer is only taking court appointed cases the case load is manageable.
•	No, we are all overworked and underpaid

5. If you have other comments on caseloads, please share them here:

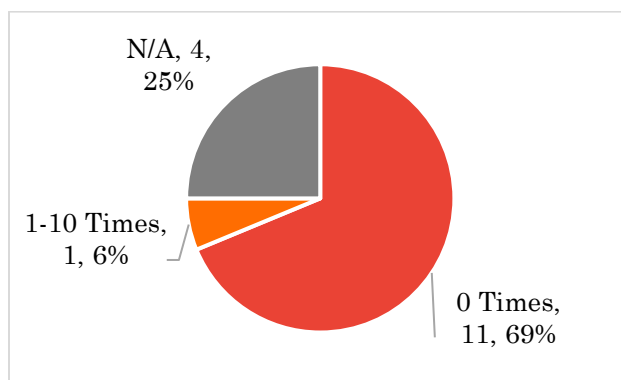
	Responses listed alphabetically:
•	Any time you have a third party payor, like we have with court appointments (and with health insurance) breakdowns occur between the provider of the services and the recipient of the services. Services are demanded by the recipients of the service without regard for the medical or legal necessity of the services because the recipient is not required to pay for the services. Likewise, services for which the provider is more likely to be paid are more routinely provided than would otherwise occur. All of this goes into figuring out whether a caseload is manageable. Breakdowns also occur between the provider of the services and the third party payor. The payor is most often not in a position to judge whether the services rendered were medically or legally necessary. This often results in necessary services not being performed (for fear they will not be compensated) and in unnecessary services being performed (in order to increase the level of compensation.)
•	Because there are so few attorneys taking high level appointments they are overburdened with lots of very serious cases and do not have adequate time to work them.
•	Caseloads are not currently manageable because there are not enough lawyers willing to take on court-appointed cases. Lawyers are not willing to take on court-appointed cases because the two-fold compensation structure is unrealistic, is not applied in a consistent and predictable basis, or both. First, the "flat fee" payment system is unrealistic due to the significantly increased demands of

	the Michael Morton Act and the evolving realities of competent criminal defense work. A reasonably conscientious lawyer cannot set up a file, meet with the client, file base pleadings, go to court appearances, read discovery, analyze indictments, handle office and administrative work, for the flat fee amount. Second, the Courts have applied the hourly fee schedule in an arbitrary and capricious manner. While the hourly fee dollar amounts seem workable, almost always the Courts decide that the hours a lawyer spends representing a client is "too much", so the lawyer's payment at the Courts' promised rate is cut, sometimes more than 50%. Because the Courts refuse to make consistent payments for hours expended for legal services for indigent defendants, lawyers avoid-, and will continue to drop off-, the court-appointment wheel. To summarize, the big problem today (and in the past) is that the promised hourly fee payments are inconsistent, spotty, and, some might say, misleading. An important ancillary effect of the Courts' erratic payment history is to depress the morale of the court-appointed criminal defense bar. The unrealistic caseloads of Taylor County attorneys will not ameliorate until the Courts pay at the promised hourly fee. Taylor County has three choices: Either continue to wither the court-appointed criminal defense bar, or pay the promised hourly fee for time expended, or move to a Public Defender System. You pick.
	• My caseload is challenging but we are managing it.
	• There are enough attorneys in the county, but not enough attorneys taking appointed cases because they don't pay enough.

Investigation

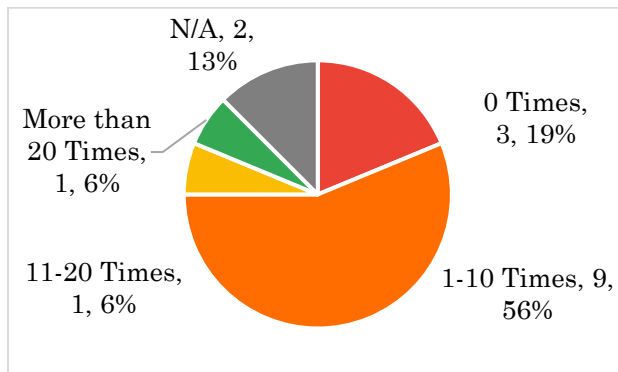
6. About how many times per year do you request an investigator for a misdemeanor case?

[Provided answers: 0 Times; 1-10 Times; More than 10 Times; Not Applicable]



7. About how many times per year do you request an investigator for a felony case?

[Provided answers: 0 Times; 1-10 Times; 11-20 Times; More than 20 Times; Not Applicable]



8. What types of cases almost always require an investigator?

	Responses listed alphabetically:
	Almost all assault cases, murder, and sex cases. Some robbery cases, burglary cases, and drug cases. Also, cases that appear to be jury trials (if only for punishment witnesses).
	Cases with multiple witnesses
	most 1st degrees all child sexual assaults
	Most of them
	Multiple defendants
	Murder
	Murder
	Murder and Aggravated Assaults
	Murder, aggravated assault, other complex felony cases with many witnesses or contradicting evidence
	Murder, sexual assault, aggravated robbery
	Sexual
	Sexual assault, assault, multi-party drug cases, any 1st degree felony

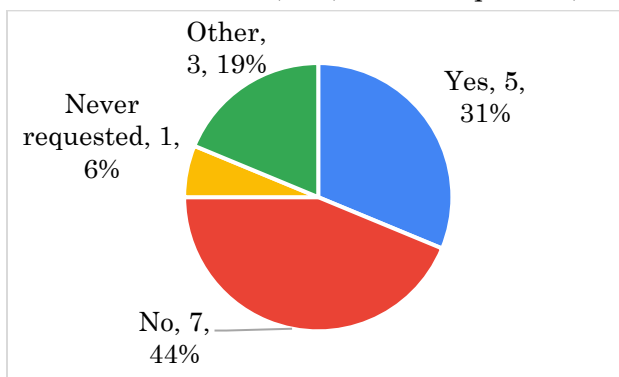
9. What types of cases almost never require an investigator?

	Responses listed alphabetically:
	Drug Cases
	Drug cases generated from a traffic stop
	Drug possession, criminal trespass, PI
	Ideally, an investigator ought to be available for any case in which investigation must be undertaken. This is because defense counsel cannot both represent a defendant in trial and also when a witness changes his or her version of events to differ from that given pre-trial then take the stand and testify in contradiction of the witness who has changed his or her version of events. More simply, defense counsel cannot be both a defense witness and serve as defense counsel. The defense has a compelling duty to investigate even if the discovery received from the prosecution suggests a "slam dunk" case for the state. That investigation can only be skipped if there is a

	reasonable and objective basis to skip it, and the word of the defendant is not necessarily sufficient to permit the defense counsel to skip the investigation. Because of the above, it is impossible to categorically state that this or that type of case "almost never require[s] an investigator".
•	misdeamoners
•	On site possession of illegal substances
•	possession of a controlled substance
•	Possession of a Controlled Substance
•	The need for an investigator is typically driven by the evidence and EVERY case could have evidence that may necessitate an investigator from misdemeanor to felony.
•	Theft and possession
•	Theft cases. Cases with confessions (unless jury trial is indicated).

10. Have you had any difficulties receiving adequate funding for investigation in Taylor County?

[Provided answers: Yes; No; Never requested; Other]



	“Other” responses listed alphabetically:
•	in the past. I only take court appointed appeals now.
•	Only recently began taking Taylor County appointments. Adequate funding of investigation is, however, in my experience a fairly common problem elsewhere.
•	There are not enough investigators.

11. If you have other comments on investigation, please share them here:

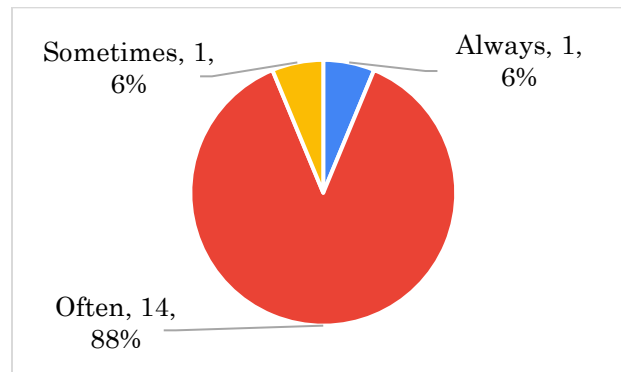
	Responses listed alphabetically:
•	I have had difficulty securing an investigator, but not because of funding. Instead, the problem is with identifying a good investigator.
•	Solving the problem of providing investigators for indigent criminal cases is a bad problem and would be a good start to retaining more attorneys on the court's appointment list
•	There are not enough investigators.
•	Too often Judges in Taylor County don't understand the inherent conflict that exists in all assault cases. In assault cases with a confession, or in which the defendant absolutely does not want a trial, the lawyer can typically ignore the conflict and deal with the complaining witness (very carefully). But in cases where the defendant denies the assault, or otherwise demands a trial, an investigator should (must) be appointed to shield the defense from potentially becoming a witness

in a trial. Not all Judges in Taylor County recognize the attorney-witness conflict, to the peril of the defense. I have a pending case where a Judge insisted I speak to a complaining witness before an investigator would be appointed. The complaining witness contradicted what she told the police. If this witness denies at trial what she told me, do I have to testify? See the problem?
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Client Communication

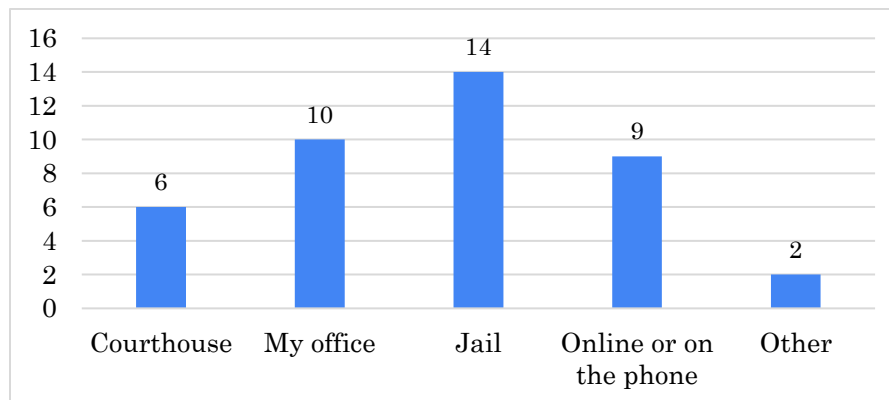
12.How often are you able to communicate effectively with clients?

[Provided answers: Always (Every Case); Often; Sometimes; Rarely; Never (No Cases); Not Applicable]



13.Where do you most often meet with clients? Select all that apply.

[Provided answers: Courthouse; My office; Jail; Online or on the phone; Other]



	“Other” responses listed alphabetically:
•	It depends on where the client is.
•	video zoom

14.What are your biggest barriers to meeting with clients?

	Responses listed alphabetically:
•	Client unavailability
•	Housing of defendants in remote jails over a hundred miles from the county of prosecution.
•	Locating clients

•	Mental illness
•	None
•	Often, indigent defendants who are not in custody don't have stable contact information.
•	schedule
•	Sometimes a client is nonresponsive to requests for an interview when the court-appointed client is free on bond.
•	They get moved without my knowledge.
•	Time
•	Time
•	Time to go to jail

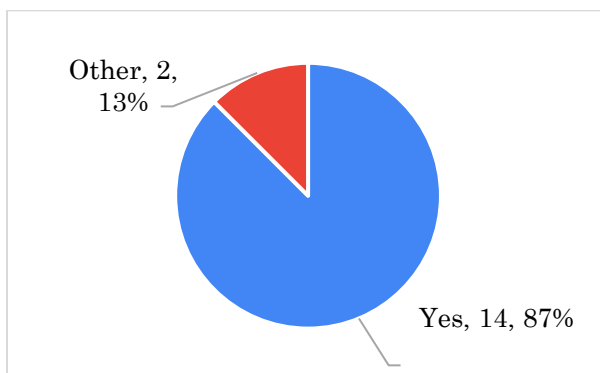
15.If you have other comments on client communication, please share them here:

	Responses listed alphabetically:
•	Many clients in the jail rely on their fellow inmates for legal advice.
•	Some clients are difficult and unreasonable in their requests, wanting a case dismissed when the prosecution appears to have merit, or continuing to demand a resolution that has been requested but denied by the prosecution, etc. These kinds of clients cause the lawyer to have to expend significantly more time on the client's matter(s) if only to maintain client control and trust.

COVID-19 and Online Courts

16.Have you appeared in online courts?

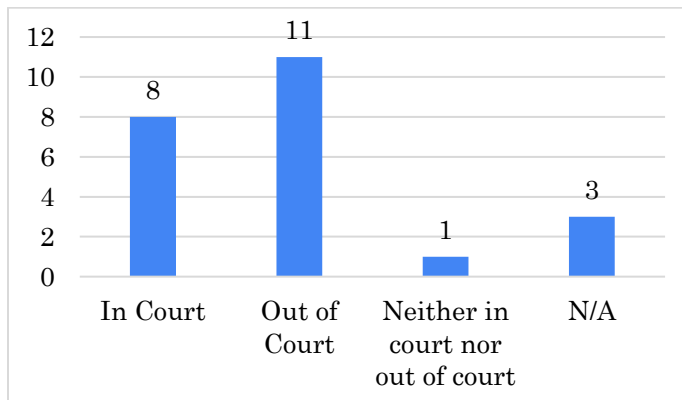
[Provided answers: Yes; No; Other]



	“Other” responses listed alphabetically:
•	during covid
•	Yes, but not in Taylor County

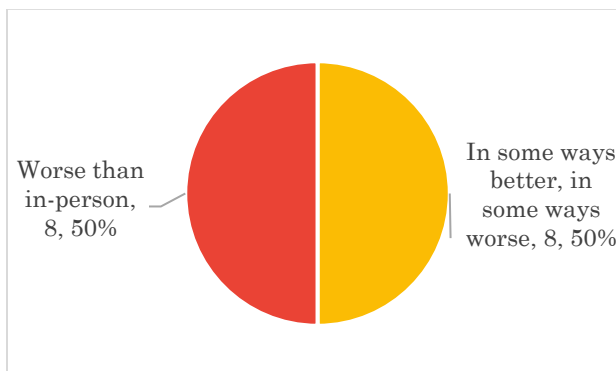
17. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, at what times have you been able to confidentially communicate with clients? Select all that apply.

[Provided answers: In court; Out of court; Neither in court nor out of court; Not applicable]



18. Overall, do you think that online courts are better or worse for clients than in-person courts?

[Provided answers: Better than in-person; Worse than in-person; Neither better nor worse; No opinion; Not applicable; Other]



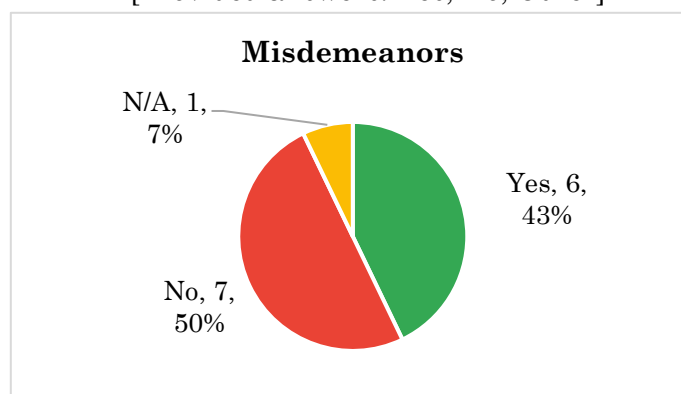
19. If you have other comments on COVID-19 and online courts, please share them here:

“Other” responses listed alphabetically:	
•	I think the Taylor County Judges did as well as they could handling criminal court during the pandemic. I personally have no complaints and, to repeat, the Judges did well. I think the prosecution could have been more reasonable on property and drug crimes to help jail overcrowding, but without the hammer of trial available, the prosecution too often seemed to be on an extended paid vacation, lol. Unfortunately, the backlog of cases has become immense for both sides, thus creating more stress than ever before.
•	Informality breeds contempt. On-line courts seem to diminish the perception of seriousness of the process.
•	No contested matter should be conducted online. Pleas where the attorney has previously visited with the client face to face are okay to be conducted online
•	Not a personal connection. Especially when discussing hard facts of a case
•	Plea Agreement hearings are as good online. Any contested matter is worse online.

Payment Vouchers

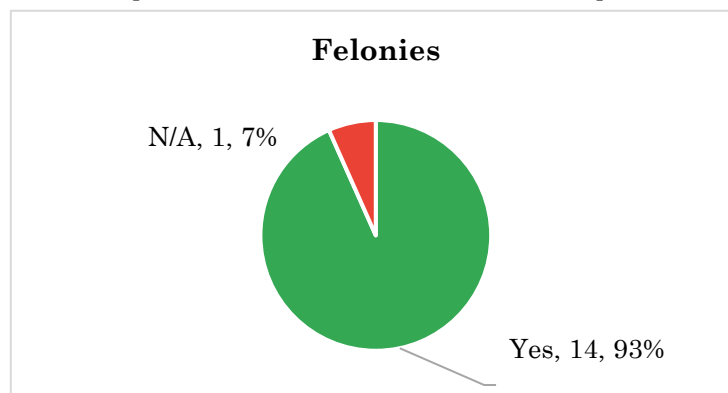
20. When submitting payment vouchers for misdemeanor cases, do you typically include out-of-court time?

[Provided answers: Yes; No; Other]



21. When submitting payment vouchers for felony cases, do you typically include out-of-court time?

[Provided answers: Yes; No; Other]



22. If you typically do not bill for out-of-court time, why not?

•	I don't take misdemeanors typically but if I get appointed I only get paid the fee the judge says.
•	I should bill misdemeanors for out-of-court time because too many misdemeanors take as much time to resolve as a felony case. Instead, I have simply given up court-appointed misdemeanors because \$200 is simply unrealistic (and anachronistic).
•	misdemeanors are usually handled in-court

23. If you have other comments on payment vouchers, please share them here:

•	Any court appointed counsel system that permits the court to refuse payment for this or that service claimed by counsel in essence is substituting the court's judgment of what services are necessary and reasonable for defense counsel's, or in the alternative amount to an implication that defense counsel is engaged in a fraud on the court. This in turn can have a chilling effect on defense representation. The days are long, long gone when criminal law was so simple that anyone with a law license could be relied upon to properly handle a serious criminal case. With
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	that in mind, criminal defense counsel in the 21st century take appointments generally at rates far below retained rates, and should be able to rely on the court to approve payment for services rendered the same as any other professional.
•	Out-of-court time should be paid because that is time taken away from other opportunities to be paid for legal services.
•	Pay the represented hourly fee or go to a Public Defender system. Justice on the cheap is not justice.
•	There is no perfect system. From looking at a fee voucher no judge can tell if the hours submitted were reasonable. For example, a case that is ultimately pled might require lots of hours of research even if that research does not result in any pleadings such as a motion to suppress being filed. On the other hand, the attorney may be billing for hours for research that was never done. The Judge has no way to tell.
•	To my knowledge, my vouchers have always been approved as submitted.

Taylor County

24. What is working well in Taylor County's indigent defense system?

•	Attorneys are appointed promptly.
•	Efficient appointment of counsel on a timely basis.
•	Our coordinator is very good.
•	Quality of lawyers. Most of the lawyers i would want defending me
•	Seems ok
•	Sharon Miller
•	Sharon Miller does a great job.
•	The appointed counsel are conscientious about their work.
•	The Courts are beginning to open up and have more defendants appear at the courthouse.
•	The District Judges are good about recognizing my caseload, and they are sufficiently flexible to make my caseload manageable.

25. What is not working well in Taylor County's indigent defense system?

•	accountability and oversight
•	Appreciation for the time of the Defense attorney
•	First, most lawyers are unable to endure "Defense Traumatic Stress Syndrome". Representing "guilty people" is not easy work. You have to fight the prosecution. You have to fight the Court. And too often you have to fight your own client! Therefore, when you can find lawyers who can deal with DTSD, you have to provide consistent remuneration or they are going to avoid the most difficult cases.
•	Need more first degree lawyers. But they don't like the low fee rates.
•	Number of lawyers on list
•	One of the courts does not like to compensate attorneys adequately nor pay for investigators and trial clothing. Also, court appointed lawyers seem to be treated with less respect.
•	Some lawyers are not seeing their clients until they are brought to the courthouse for a plea.
•	The pay is so low, nobody wants to take the cases, which results in appointed counsel being overloaded.

•	There are not enough attorneys willing to accept 1st and 2nd Degree Felonies. Consequently, only about 8 attorneys are assigned the difficult cases.
•	There are not enough lawyers on the Court Appointed List.

26. How could TIDC help improve indigent defense in Taylor County?

•	Encourage moving to a public defender system
•	get more funding
•	I don't know the answer. I don't know what TIDC does, and I do not know what TIDC has the power to do.
•	I don't know.
•	Make investigators easily available, pay attorneys on an actual time basis,
•	My observation is Sharon Miller is doing all she can do -- it's up to the Courts to do their part.
•	Set certain standards to help ensure indigent get not only adequate representation but are allowed adequate resources (investigators, etc.) to prepare their cases for a fair trial.
•	Suggest higher rates for appointed attorneys
•	We probably need a Public Defenders Office.

27. If you would like TIDC to follow up with you, please provide your name and contact information:

[Answers redacted.]