



CHAMBERS OF  
JUDGE CLINT WOODS  
COUNTY COURT AT LAW No. 3  
JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

June 17, 2025

Joel Lieurance  
Senior Policy Monitor  
Texas Indigent Defense Commission  
209 W. 14th Street, Room 202 (Price Daniel Building)  
Austin, Texas 78701  
(512) 936-6994 main  
(512) 463-5724 fax  
(512) 773-0346 direct

RE: Response to the Texas Indigent Defense Commission's Third  
Follow-up Review of Jefferson County, Texas, in June 2025.

Dear Mr. Lieurance:

Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) representatives  
Ashley DeLaGarza, Cody Huffman, and Joel Lieurance conducted an  
on-site visit to Jefferson County on March 25, 2025, to follow up on  
recommendations made by the previous TIDC October 2022 review  
report. Upon completing the 2025 review, TIDC noted that the only  
remaining deficiency involved the untimely appointment of counsel for  
County Court misdemeanor defendants making bail shortly after

magistration. *See*, TIDC's Third Follow-up Review of Jefferson County's Indigent Defense Systems, June 2025, at P. 10 [hereafter "TIDC June 2025 Report"]. The District Courts were found to be in compliance with this requirement for felony defendants.

In the District Courts, indigent defendants are immediately appointed counsel by the magistrate judge. In County Courts, appointments for indigent defendants have been made by the staff of each individual court at the defendant's initial appearance<sup>1</sup>. As noted by the TIDC, this process violates *Rothgery v. Gillespie County*, 554 U.S. 191 (2008). *See*, TIDC June 2025 Report at P. 7.

Previously, in October 2022, this same issue was deemed to be applicable to all of the Jefferson County criminal courts by the TIDC. At that time, in its TIDC Response, the Criminal Courts pledged to ensure timely appointment by the following language:

"Concerning the new issue, TIDC identified it as follows:

**Requirement 4: appoint counsel promptly.**

---

<sup>1</sup> See Jefferson County Court Indigent Plan, "Prompt Appointment of Counsel", i.-vi. (special attention to vi. note 1) (appointing authority is the trial court); Jefferson County District Court Indigent Plan, "Appoint Counsel Promptly", A. , vi., 1 (appointing authority is the magistrate judge); *see also*, TIDC June 2025 Report at P. 7.

**2022 Recommendation 1:** Appointments of counsel are delayed for defendants making bail in the period between Article 15.17 counsel requests and the court coordinator making appointments of counsel.

To address this issue to the satisfaction of the TIDC, the Indigent Defense Coordinator is now timely appointing counsel within one (1) working day in response to the magistrate's ruling made during the Article 15.17 hearing, irrespective of bail status. In the event of the Indigent Defense Coordinator's absence from the office, another Court Clerk in the office will be instructed to make the appointments timely."

The TIDC accepted the foregoing response in October 2022.

Unfortunately, the County Courts did not strictly adhere to this assertion.

To remedy the continuing deficiency, the County Court Judges have resolved to *strictly* monitor and ensure staff compliance with the previously articulated policy set forth above. All indigent misdemeanor defendants will now be appointed counsel within one (1) working day in accordance with the assertions previously made in the October 2022 response.

Overall, Jefferson County has made great strides in achieving the objectives of the code, administrative regulations, and the TIDC's specifically articulated issues. We enjoy a professional and collegial relationship with TIDC representatives.

This letter of response to the TIDC Recommendations in its June, 2025 Third Follow-up Review of Jefferson County's Indigent Defense Systems is a collaborative product of the County Court at Law Judges of Jefferson County. Both County Court at Law Judges have reviewed this letter, agree with the contents, and accept responsibility for ensuring the representations made herein are fulfilled.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Judge Clint Woods  
County Court at Law No. 3