



209 W. 14<sup>th</sup> St., Room 202  
Austin, Texas 78701

**Contact: Scott Ehlers,**  
**Executive Director**  
[SEhlers@tidc.texas.gov](mailto:SEhlers@tidc.texas.gov)  
512-936-6994

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### **TIDC Funds Mental Health Public Defense Improvements in Texas**

AUSTIN – On Thursday, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) awarded over half a million dollars in mental health grant funding to Burnet, Galveston, and Dallas Counties to support indigent defense in the state. TIDC’s legislative appropriation requires that \$2.5 million per year be used for specialized public defender or managed counsel programs serving defendants with mental health challenges.

The **North Hill Country Regional Public Defender**, serving Blanco, Burnet, and Llano Counties, was awarded a \$60,072 grant to hire an additional Mental Health Social Worker. This increased capacity will allow the office to represent the growing number of defendants with mental health issues.

The **Galveston County Misdemeanor Mental Health Public Defender Office (GCMMHPDO)** was awarded \$122,611 to add one assistant public defender and one mental health caseworker. The office, established in 2020, needs to expand its staff to allow more eligible defendants to receive specialized representation offered by the office.

**Dallas County** was awarded \$335,734 to expand the Mental Health Division of the Public Defender’s Office. The office will add two attorneys and two case managers to serve clients with mental illness or intellectual/developmental disabilities, including those found incompetent to stand trial and clients who have not been found incompetent but would benefit from specialized representation and case management.

“The Texas Legislature recognizes the importance and effectiveness of providing specialized representation to defendants with mental illness, which is why it has directed TIDC to fund these important programs,” said TIDC Executive Director Scott Ehlers. “These public defense investments are helping counties across Texas get treatment services to defendants more quickly, reducing recidivism and making communities safer.”

The Board also approved \$17.5 million in FY24 Formula Grant funding and directed TIDC staff to issue the FY25 Improvement Grant Request for Applications (RFA) document. If your county needs indigent defense support, please contact TIDC: 512-936-6994.

#### **About TIDC**

The Texas Indigent Defense Commission funds, oversees, and improves indigent defense in each of the State’s 254 counties. TIDC is led by 13 commission members and 17 staff. To learn more, visit [www.tidc.texas.gov](http://www.tidc.texas.gov).