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The Texas Indigent Defense Commission Approves More Than \$21 Million to Strengthen Indigent Defense, Including Significant Investments in Rural Counties

AUSTIN, TX — At its December 5th Board Meeting, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) approved more than \$21 million in grant funding, with substantial investments directed toward strengthening public defender programs in rural communities. This support reflects TIDC's continued efforts to expand access to quality legal representation, improve public defender capacity, and reinforce local indigent defense systems across Texas.

The Commission awarded \$20 million in FY 2026 Formula Grants, which reimburse a portion of counties' indigent defense expenditures based on their population and prior year's expenses.

"By investing in counties across the state, we are strengthening the foundation of Texas's indigent defense systems and ensuring every community has the support it needs to provide fair and effective representation," said Nueces County District Judge Missy Medary, TIDC Board Chair and Presiding Judge of the 5th Administrative Judicial Region.

The Commission also approved targeted grants to address county-specific needs and enhance indigent defense services, including:

- **\$44,019 to Tom Green County** to establish an Indigent Defense Coordinator.
- **\$122,646 to Maverick County** to increase its FY 2026 award for the Tri-County Regional Public Defender Office, bringing TIDC's total support to \$1,401,171.
- **\$20,000 to Stephens County** to help offset significant expenses in three serious felony cases.

TIDC issued its second round of funding under the One-Time or Temporary Assistance for Existing Rural Public Defense Programs, a \$10 million legislative initiative designed to support rural counties with paid internships, recruiting assistance, training, technology, and temporary county match reductions. Under this program, the Commission awarded almost \$1.1 million to support public defense efforts in Tom Green, Victoria, Hale, and Goliad Counties, as well as the Regional Public Defender Office for Capital Cases and the Texas RioGrande Public Defender.

"Rural counties face unique challenges in maintaining strong indigent defense systems with limited resources," said TIDC Executive Director Scott Ehlers. "This one-time funding helps ensure they have the tools and staffing needed to continue that vital work."

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 20 staff. To learn more, visit www.tidc.texas.gov.

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