



## **Activity Report**

Texas A&M University Law School | Texas Tech University School of Law

Office of Court Administration | Texas Indigent Defense Commission

June 1 – December 31, 2025

## **Summary**

This report details the relevant activities of the Innocence Project of Texas (IPTX) from June 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 to comply with Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) twice yearly reporting requirements. During the reporting period, IPTX received 776 new requests for assistance with 106 cases under active investigation. Ten clinic students provided 1,832 hours of assistance in case law research, case investigation and document creation.

## **Use of Contract Funds**

Contract funds were used for direct assistance to investigate potential post-conviction innocence cases and pursue relief for defendants with credible claims. Per the Interagency Cooperation Contract, funds supported the intake and evaluation process, case investigation and litigation costs. As part of the contract, IPTX conducts the “Actual Innocence” clinics at Texas A&M University Law School (TAMU) and Texas Tech School of Law (TTU).

IPTX reviews both DNA and non-DNA cases of post-conviction and appeal claims of innocence with a focus on those at greatest risk for error including, but not limited to, cases based on mistaken witness identification, inaccurate or “junk” forensic science and false confessions. Funded staff engage in intake; case review; evaluate evidence; obtain expert assistance; prepare appropriate cases for litigation, including legal research and drafting motions and legal memoranda. Staff prepare cases for post-conviction litigation including locating evidence through city, county and state agencies, subpoenaing witnesses, and conducting depositions or other interviews necessary prior to litigation.

Initial applications/questionnaires are reviewed by an IPTX staff member. Those that meet the required criteria (claim of actual innocence, post-conviction, felony, completed direct appeals) are referred to the law school clinics for further review. Clinic students assist in document review to determine if there is claim of actual innocence and if there are options for relief. Each student prepares a case memo that is reviewed by a staff attorney. Based on the totality of the document review, if actual innocence remains possible, the case proceeds to field investigation that can include locating biological evidence for testing,

interviewing witnesses, etc. If sufficient new evidence has been discovered demonstrating a compelling case for actual innocence, IPTX will proceed with litigation. Funds are also used to support case related expenses including public records fees, postage, case related travel and document storage costs.

**TAMU Clinic:** During the fall semester of 2025, seven TAMU law students enrolled in the “Actual Innocence” clinic. The students completed 625 hours of work including, but not limited to, review of trial transcripts, police reports, witness statements and forensic reports; client and witness interviews; preparation of cases memos; and case conferences with IPTX legal staff.

**TTU Clinic:** During the fall semester of 2025, four TTU law students enrolled in the “Actual Innocence” clinic. The students completed 1,207 hours of work including, but not limited to, review of trial transcripts, police reports, witness statements and forensic reports; client and witness interviews; preparation of cases memos; and case conferences with IPTX legal staff.

### **Cases Awaiting Screening and Backlog**

As of December 31, 2025, 605 requests for assistance were awaiting screening. This includes those applicants who have returned a completed questionnaire that is waiting for review by a staff member to determine if the applicant meets the required criteria (claim of actual innocence, post-conviction, felony, completed direct appeals) in order to move forward to the document review stage. 106 cases are in the document review or investigation stages. Twelve cases are in active litigation.

### **Work Performed**

#### Screening & Investigation

- 776 total requests for assistance received;
- 776 total requests for assistance based on new claim of actual innocence;
- 215 innocence claims screened;
- 129 innocence claims closed after screening
- 0 claims closed after investigation;
- 106 innocence claims under active investigation at end of period;
- 0 innocence claims awaiting investigation at end of period.

#### Litigation

- 2 number of new innocence claims with legal remedy pursued;
- 1 number of innocence claims with relief granted;
- 0 number of innocence claims with relief denied;

## Student Activity

- 10 law students participating in the project;
- 1,832 hours performed by law students;
- 0 students from other fields of study participating in the project

## Case Highlights

### Joe David Padron

In 2004, Mr. Padron was sentenced to life in prison for the shooting deaths of two gang members in Corpus Christi in 2002. Since the trial, a witness came forward with credible evidence about the confession of the actual perpetrator. IPTX also uncovered evidence that a State's witness committed perjury at the original trial and a second witness recanted their testimony. IPTX also presented evidence of prosecutorial misconduct indicating that the prosecutor promoted false statements from the perjuring witness in order to bolster his credibility. A hearing took place in Nueces County with closing arguments on June 16, 2023. In September, the district judge recommended relief based and the recommendation was sent to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals for a final ruling. On October 6, 2023 Mr. Padron was released on bond with the support of the Nueces County District Attorney's Office. The case was sent to the Criminal Court of Appeals who ruled on April 16, 2025 that Mr. Padron's conviction should be vacated based on false testimony and Brady and sent the case back to the district court. On October 7, 2025, the Nueces County District Court dismissed all charges.