



# Texas Indigent Defense Workshop

October 23 & 24, 2025

Texas Association of Counties Event Center  
1210 San Antonio Street, Austin TX. 78701- 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

## AGENDA

### *Day 1-Thurs., Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>*

- 8:15 – 9:00 a.m. **Registration**
- 9:00 – 9:15 a.m. **Welcome**  
Scott Ehlers, Executive Director, Texas Indigent Defense Commission
- 9:15 – 9:45 a.m. **Recap of the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature & TIDC Budget Update (0.5 Hour CLE)**  
Wesley Shackelford, Deputy Director, TIDC  
Crystal Leff-Pinon, Director of Family Protection Representation, TIDC  
Scott Ehlers, Executive Director, TIDC
- 9:45 – 10:30 a.m. **TIDC Funding Opportunities, Planning Studies, & Statewide Resources (0.75 Hour CLE)**  
Edwin Colfax, Director of Grant Funding, TIDC  
Bill Cox, Director of Public Defense Improvement, TIDC  
Stacie Lieberman, Director of Post-Conviction Programs, CAPDS  
Katy Jo Muncie, Deputy Director & Director of Defense Services and Outreach, CAPDS
- 10:30 – 10:45 a.m. **Break**
- 10:45 – 12:00 p.m. **Title IV-E: Increased Funding, Eligibility, Claims, and Potential Uses for Title IV-E Funds (1.25 Hours CLE)**  
Crystal Leff-Pinon, Director of Family Protection Representation, TIDC  
Ardell Ray, CPS Regional Contract Program Director, DFPS Region VII
- Family Protection Representation: Options for Representation**  
Crystal Leff-Pinon, Director of Family Protection Representation, TIDC
- 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch & Lunch Speaker: Angelica Cogliano**, Criminal Defense Attorney, Cogliano & Miro Criminal Defense Law, Austin, Texas **(.75 Hour CLE, Ethics)**
- 1:00 – 1:30 p.m. **Keynote Speaker: Harris Co. Commissioner Rodney Ellis**  
Progress & Ongoing Challenges Since Passage of the Fair Defense Act **(0.5 Hour CLE)**
- 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. **Addressing Defendants with Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities (1.25 Hour CLE)**  
Kama Harris, Director of Policy & Education, Judicial Commission on Mental Health  
Christina Sanders, MSW, MCJ, Social Worker, North Hill Country Public Defender Office  
Nikita Srivastava, Trial & Resource Attorney, Bexar County MAC Office  
Lori Gallo, MSW, Social Worker, Bexar County MAC Office  
*Moderator: William “Bill” Cox, Director of Public Defense Improvement, TIDC*
- 2:45 – 3:00 p.m. **Break**

- 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. ***The Evolving Requirements for Unfiled Cases: Bail Reform and Early Appointment of Counsel (1.0 Hour CLE)***  
 Rebecca Spencer Tavitaz, First Assistant, El Paso Public Defender's Office  
 Geoff Burkhart, Travis County Executive, Community Legal Services  
 Bronson Tucker, General Counsel, Texas Justice Courts Training Center  
 Melissa Astrowski, Bail and Pretrial Program Manager, Office of Court Administration  
*Moderator: Wesley Shackelford, Deputy Director, TIDC; William "Bill" Cox, Director of Public Defense Improvement, TIDC*
- 4:00 – 4:50 p.m. ***Break-out Session (Roundtable Topics- See Suggestions Below)***  
***\*\*Breakout Session Topics\*\****  
 Exploring *Padilla* Requirements  
 Growing Your Appointment Lists  
 Using Mitigation in Non-Capital Cases  
 Mental Health and IDD Concerns  
 Controlling Caseloads  
 Handling Attorney Performance Complaints  
 Thinking about Appointments at the Intersection of Family and Criminal Law  
 How to Implement a New Family Protection Representation Program  
 Establishing or Expanding a Public Defender's Office
- 4:50 – 5:00 p.m. ***Feedback Session***

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***Day 2-Fri., Oct. 24***

- 8:15 – 9:00 a.m. ***Arrive/Registration***
- 9:00 – 9:50 a.m. ***TIDC Website Walkthrough: New Functions, Uses, and Future Updates & Data Matters: Improving Indigent Defense with TIDC Data (1.0 Hour CLE)***  
 Dr. Sarah Gammell, Research Director, TIDC
- 9:50 – 10:00 a.m. ***Break***
- 10:00 – 11:00 pm ***Everything You Wanted to Know About Starting and Running a Rural Regional Public Defender Office but Were Afraid to Ask (1.0 Hour CLE)***  
 Nathan Craddock, County Auditor, Tom Green County  
 James McDermott, Chief Defender, Far West Texas Regional Public Defender Office  
 Karli Kennell, Chief Defender, Hill Country Regional Public Defender Office  
 Judge Ben Zeller, County Judge, Victoria County  
*Moderator: Scott Ehlers, Executive Director, TIDC*
- 11:00 – 12:00 p.m. ***Addressing the Attorney Shortage Crisis (1.0 Hour, CLE)***  
 Jason Howell, Chief Defender, Panhandle Area Public Defender Office  
 Natalie Ware, Misdemeanor Chief & Training Director, Harris County MAC Office  
 Amrutha Jindal, Executive Director, Lone Star Defenders Office  
*Panelist and Moderator: Kristin Meeks, Senior Policy Analyst, TIDC*
- 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. ***Lunch & Lunch Speaker: Judge Melanie Lira, County Court 7, Bexar County (invited) (.75 Hour CLE)***
- 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Open Forum on All Things Indigent Defense