



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 2020



Texas Judicial Council

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TECHNOLOGY & DATA

JUDICIAL ACCESS TO COURT RECORDS (RE:SEARCHTX)

re:SearchTX

As part of the eFiling contract, Tyler Technologies is contracted to provide document access (called Re:SearchTX). The tool is in use by Texas judges, clerks, attorneys on the case, and other registered users (general public). It allows users to filter eFiled documents down by county, court, case, party, or a combination of those criteria. Since the last meeting, the number of users on the system has increased to more than 21,000 – of which 13,650 are the general public. The system houses more than 35,000,000 electronic court documents.

Tyler has completed work with ten counties, including several of the largest counties, to integrate local case management systems with re:SearchTX. This allows clerks to control access to documents locally and have re:SearchTX respect those security settings. This also allows those clerks to put additional document such as orders and judgments, as well as documents from well before re:SearchTX existed. In addition to these counties, five additional counties are in the pipeline to be integrated.

Last fall, the Supreme Court adopted the Judicial Committee on Information Technology's recommendations to change the definition of "Attorney on the Case" to include all staff in that attorney's firm, effectively making it "Firm on the Case". This expands access to no-cost documents to all attorneys and staff in associated with the law firm as an attorney on the case.

At its December meeting, JCIT adopted recommendations to allow criminal case filings on re:SearchTX. These recommendations have been forwarded to the high courts for review and possible action.

OCA's Information Services Division (ISD) is instructed by the Legislature to directly provide staff and information technology equipment and services to the two high courts, the 14 intermediate appellate courts and six judicial branch state agencies – more than 1000 users. The division also provides staff to coordinate and facilitate the work of the Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT).

E-FILING

The e-Filing system supports more than 312,000 users and handles 35,000 filings each day across all district, county, justice, and appellate courts. More than half of the courts are integrated with the e-filing system which allows them to accept a document and automatically transmit to the local case management system.

As of January 1st, eFiling is mandatory for attorneys in all criminal, civil, family, and probate cases at the district/county level and above. JCIT is working with the justice courts to continue to push eFiling at that level. Currently there are 117 JPs across 23 counties that accept eFilings on a permissive basis.

In July, OCA entered into a contract with Gartner Inc. to assist OCA in the procurement of a new eFiling contract (currently set to expire on August 31, 2021) to provide eFiling, redaction, document access, and forms assembly services that are at least at the same level of functionality as is available today in eFileTexas.

The new eFiling contract is anticipated to be executed in the Fall of 2020, allowing approximately one year of transition time to the new eFiling contract. In September and October, Gartner and OCA met with eFiling subject matter experts, representing both the filer community and the courts, to gather requirements which Gartner will

use to create the Request for Offer (RFO). Gartner and OCA also visited two courts to observe their eFiling processes as well. OCA anticipates that the RFO will be issued in the next few weeks.

OTHER INFORMATION SERVICES PROJECTS

Workstation Refresh – OCA Information Services has completed approximately 60% the workstation refresh for Fiscal Year 2020. This effort will replace older computing equipment at all the appellate courts, as well as at many of the judicial branch state agencies. Most appellate courts have their new equipment deployed as well as most Austin supported courts and agencies. The project is expected to be completed by May.

HB 3834 Compliance – OCA has identified and acquired certified security training for our end users to comply with HB 3834. This bill requires any employee with more than 25% of duties performed on a computer to complete an annual cybersecurity training. Training will be rolling out to all end users within the next few weeks and will be completed by June.

COURT SERVICES

The Court Services Section includes the agency’s court security, children’s courts, specialty courts oversight, consulting, language access, judicial information, and research programs.

COURT SECURITY

The purpose of the Court Security Division is to:

- Support the establishment of court security committees through training and technical assistance;
- Assist courts with conducting and reviewing security and emergency preparedness assessments and developing improvement plans;
- Support the implementation of privacy protections for judges by facilitating the restriction of public access to the residential address of a judge or judge's spouse; and
- Serve as a clearinghouse of information regarding judicial and court security best practices.

OCA welcomes Nicholas Barsetti, Court Security Specialist, to the Research and Court Services Division. Nicholas comes to OCA with a wealth of experience as a Senior Security Specialist with the Judicial Council of California in San Francisco. Nicholas will support the Court Security Division providing consultative, training, facility assessments, and supporting the Texas judiciary throughout Texas. The focus of the Court Security Division during this period has continued to raise awareness concerning the court security laws. This effort relies on partnerships with the various judicial training centers and other entities with a role to play on advancing courthouse security.

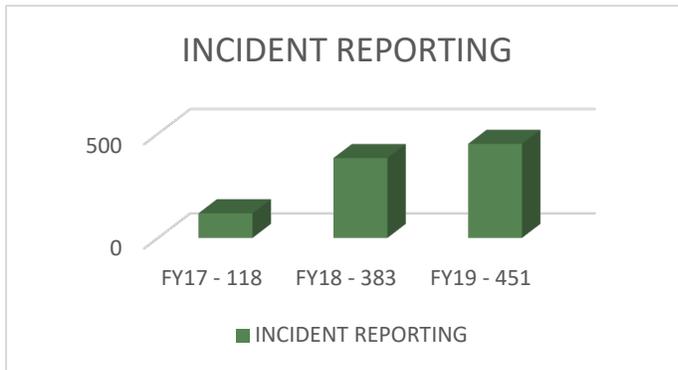
OCA continues an awareness campaign to reach active and retired judges, informing them of the privacy protections available to them under SB 42 (85R – Zaffirini/Smithee). To date, nearly 1,766 judges have taken advantage of the privacy protections afforded to them under the bill.

The Court Security Director:

- Conducted 47 courthouse assessments to date (with approximately 26 pending scheduling) and 5 judicial residential assessments;
- Administratively processed and reported several judicial threats to DPS;
- Attended judicial training conferences;
- Conducted approximately four presentations before various county and municipal court security committees, law enforcement, judicial training entities; and

- Incorporated messaging to the judiciary about www.iwatchtx.com, a DPS managed, community reporting system designed to capture suspicious activities or behaviors that may indicate criminal, or terroristic related threats towards the judiciary or courthouses. This reporting site is available as a web-based platform, Android or iOS App. Reports can be submitted by anyone, and every report will be reviewed by DPS analysts for management and/or investigative referral.

During this reporting period, the division noted threats directed towards judicial officers have resulted in criminal charges and subsequent indictments showing the seriousness with which law enforcement takes in reacting to threatening criminal behavior. Security incident reporting continues to improve as law enforcement agencies are becoming aware of the importance of this reporting mandate. An example of the impact of these efforts is an increase in the number of incident reports filed as reflected in the chart of previous fiscal years.



JUDICIAL INFORMATION

OCA’s Judicial Information program is the repository for a variety of information regarding courts in Texas. It collects and maintains information from courts at all levels, analyzes court data, and produces or assists in the production of reports regarding the state’s courts and the officials who work in them. Staff provide data support to Office of Court Administration, the Texas Judicial Council, the Supreme Court for its courts of appeals [docket equalization program](#), the Council of Chief Justices, the Council of Presiding Judges, and other entities as necessary. A large amount of time is also devoted to providing support to the trial courts and clerks and their information technology staff or case management vendors on reporting issues to promote data quality and completeness.

The Judicial Information Program collects, reports and analyzes court activity statistics, judicial directory information, and other information from the approximately 2,700 courts in the state; produces the Annual Statistical Report for the Texas Judiciary, the Texas Judicial System Directory, and other publications; and provides statistical and other information about the judicial branch to the legislature, state and federal agencies, local governments, private associations and public interest groups, and others. More than 470,000 statistical and other reports were received in FY2019.

During the last period, program staff were involved in the following activities:

- Produced the following annual reports for 2019
 - [Statistical Report for the Texas Judiciary](#)
 - [Presiding Judges Report](#)
 - [Report on the Disposition of Judicial Bypass Cases](#)
 - [Writs of Attachment Report](#)
- Compiled, analyzed and presented data for the
 - inaugural meeting of the Commission on Judicial Selection
 - annual Council of Presiding Judges meeting
 - Judicial Council’s Criminal Justice Committee meeting
- Provided guidance and compiled data for the upcoming weighted caseload study for the district and statutory county courts

- Compiled information for the State Auditor’s Office for its legislatively mandated audit of reported sexual assault investigation and prosecution processes
- Drafted the quarterly proposal for transfer of cases among the courts of appeals
- Produced 3 data analyses for new district courts or county courts at law
- Began work on updating the Texas Judicial System [Directory](#) and [directory database](#)
- Made 1 presentation to municipal court clerks on reporting issues.

OTHER COURT SERVICES

Since the last Judicial Council meeting:

- Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service staff provided interpreting services in 228 hearings in 27 counties.
- In November 2019, OCA and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) convened the first meeting of the Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) to prepare for the upcoming Weighted Caseload Study. The JNAC serves as an advisory body for study by providing key input from judges at the district and county across the state. OCA is currently working with counties to collect data on the number of associate judges, magistrates, referees, and masters employed by the county for the County-level and District-level courts. In the coming months, the National Center will use this data to reach out and conduct a study of the workload of District and County level courts in Texas. This study will aid the judiciary in determining the needs and caseload currently before the courts and support its efforts to identify those counties which need increased judicial staff and resources.
- Research and Court Services will complete an in-depth study of the multi-district litigation (MDL) process across the state. The aim of the study is to provide the Judiciary with an overview of all relevant data and policy options related to the MDL process in Texas. This study will be a review available data for where the case originated, the status of the case as active or inactive, the original date of filing, whether the case was remanded or is still in pretrial, if the case was disposed, and the final county of disposition. The study will evaluate the MDL process for improvements and policy solutions to better serve the judiciary when handling complex multi-district litigation cases.
- The Texas Judicial Council’s [Centers of Excellence Program](#) continues to work with Texas courts to identify and support excellence in judicial administration. In 2019, three courts were designated as Centers of Excellence: the 347th and 214th District Courts in Nueces County, and County Court-at-Law II in Webb County. In February, the program is set to nominate County Court-at-Law II in Montgomery County as a Center of Excellence at the TJC meeting.

The goal of the Centers of Excellence Program in 2020 is to expand to more courts across all levels of the judiciary. Building on experience gained in 2019, the program continues to evaluate and refine its processes, update materials, work with recognized courts as resource centers, and encourage more courts to become involved in the Centers of Excellence Program.

- The Public Engagement Pilot Project continued, with the first of several focus groups held in Alpine, Texas, and the second in Brownsville, Texas. The project’s goal is to continue building increased public trust and confidence in the Texas judiciary through methods that enable the public to engage in open conversations.
- Court Services staff and the Information Services Division continued work on the [Pretrial Risk Assessment Information System](#) (PRAISTX) and the U.S. Department of Justice funded “Price of Justice” project dealing with court collections and related compliance practices.
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SPECIALTY COURTS

CHILDREN'S COURTS PROGRAM

Since the last report, two associate judges were hired for two new Child Protection Courts located in the Eighth Administrative Judicial Region. These courts were referenced in the last report. The judges' start date was February 3, 2020. The courts are expected to be operational by late February 2020.

Planning is underway for the annual meeting OCA hosts for child protection court associate judges and court coordinators. The meeting will be held the morning of the first day of the 2020 Child Welfare Judicial Conference, co-sponsored by the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the Supreme Court's Permanent Commission for Children, Youth, and Families (Children's Commission). The conference will be held October 26-28, 2020. A training for the court coordinators will be held Monday afternoon through the following Tuesday morning.

SPECIALTY/PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

The Statewide Problem-Solving Court Coordinator (SPCC) continued representing OCA by attending and participating in specialty court-related meetings sponsored by a diverse body of state government agencies and other stakeholders. In November 2019, the SPCC along with a coalition of Specialty Court Judges, Hon. B. Michael Chitty, 422nd District Court (Kaufman County), Hon. Paul White, 159th District Court (Angelina County), and Hon. Larry Phillips, 59th District Court (Grayson County), met with the Governor's General Counsel, Jeff Oldham, his Assistant General Counsel, Kate Miller, and Andrew Friedrichs, Criminal Justice Division Justice Programs Director, to discuss future funding of Texas Specialty Courts. The SPCC continued to serve as the Specialty Court Ombudsman, the single point-of-contact for specialty court participants and team members to report complaints/ concerns about program operations, processes, and individual team members, including the specialty court judge.

ENTERPRISE PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

REGULATORY SERVICES-JUDICIAL BRANCH CERTIFICATION COMMISSION (JBCC)

The Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) was established by the Texas Legislature during the 83rd Regular Session to promote government efficiency and create consistency across the regulated judicial professions. The nine-member commission is appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas. The core responsibility of the JBCC is the oversight of the certification, registration, and licensing of approximately 7,227 court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians and guardianship programs, process servers, and licensed court interpreters. Effective June 1, 2018, the JBCC began registering all guardianships throughout Texas, including training potential guardians and providing criminal histories to the courts for the proposed guardians.

Profession	Type	Number of Certifications, Registrations, Licenses
Court Reporters	Certification	2,159
Court Reporting Firms	Registration	317
Guardians	Certification	449
Guardianship Program	Registration	26
Process Servers	Certification	3,832
Court Interpreters	License	444
TOTAL		7,227

REGISTRATION OF GUARDIANSHIPS

SB 1096 (Zaffirini/Smithee) created a safety net to ensure guardians are registered, properly trained, receive a criminal history background check, and guardian contact data is provided to DPS and its Law Enforcement Terminal System (TLETS) to identify persons under guardianship if law enforcement contact is made with them. Since the last meeting, the connection between this system and DPS/TLETS has been made, providing law enforcement with the information on registered guardians/wards.

OCA developed a database to be filled with a registry of every guardianship in the state. As a registration prerequisite, the OCA conducts a criminal history background check and provides online training to proposed guardians. To date 37,412 proposed guardians have submitted data for registration, 13,167 have completed the training in English and Spanish, and over 6,246 criminal histories have been provided to the courts.

RECENT MEETINGS OF THE JBCC AND ADVISORY BOARDS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

JBCC meetings are conducted quarterly throughout the year. The Commission met on November 1, 2019, and the next meeting of the Commission is February 7, 2020.

The Uniform Format Manual (UFM) Committee of the Court Reporters Certification Advisory Board met on October 11, 2019.

Court Reporters Stakeholder Work Group Committee to implement provisions of SB 891 on apprentice and provisional certification met on August 30, 2019, October 11, 2019, and November 22, 2019.

The Court Reporters Advisory Board met on December 20, 2019, to consider input from the Court Reporters Stakeholder Work Group Committee on implementation of SB 891 relating to apprentice and provisional certifications.

The agendas for all JBCC meetings can be found at <http://www.txcourts.gov/jbcc/meetings-agendas/>.

JBCC COMPLIANCE SECTION COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION

In FY 2020, 31 complaints were filed and are in process or resolved:

- 10 court reporters
- 16 process servers
- 2 guardians
- 3 licensed court interpreters

The following Complaint Review Committees met:

- Court Reporter Complaint Review Committee, December 6, 2019
- Licensed Court Interpreter Complaint Review Committee, December 6, 2019
- Process Server Complaint Review Committee, December 12, 2019

COURT REPORTER ADVISORY BOARD TO ADDRESS COURT REPORTER SHORTAGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF UNIFORM FORMAT MANUAL FOR TEXAS COURT REPORTERS' RECORDS BY THE JBCC

SB 891, passed last session, requires that the JBCC establish a stakeholder work group committee to address development of apprenticeship and provisional certifications for court reporters. Other provisions of the bill require

the JBCC to develop and maintain a list of states that have certification requirements substantially equivalent to Texas, and requirements relating to Reciprocity/Endorsement are also set out in the bill. The committee is also tasked with establishing criteria for disciplinary action against firms for failure to fulfill commitments to provide court reporting services. The committee met three times on August 30, 2019, October 11, 2019, and November 22, 2019.

On December 20, 2019, the Court Reporters Advisory Board (Board) met to consider input from the Court Reporters Stakeholder Work Group Committee on implementation of SB 891 relating to apprentice and provisional certifications and other provisions in the bill to address the court reporter shortage. One of the provisions sets out conditions under which a court reporting firm is subject to disciplinary action for repeated failure to fulfill a commitment to provide court reporter services when booking depositions.

Another provision in SB 891 requires the JBCC to contact other states regarding establishing reciprocity agreements with Texas if states are interested. Approximately 30 states have been contacted. A report on the results of the inquiry is due to the Supreme Court or its designee by April 1, 2020.

A total of 18 states to date have been identified by the Board as having certification requirements substantially equivalent to Texas should an applicant certified by those states apply for certification in Texas through the endorsement process.

The Board voted to accept proposed revisions to JBCC Rules incorporating the committee's suggestions to forward to the Commission for approval and to post for public comment.

EXAMINATIONS FOR THE JBCC

The JBCC certification staff administers the examinations for the Guardianship Certification written examination and the Licensed Court Interpreter written and oral examinations. A vendor administers the written and skills examination for the Court Reporters Certification.

- JBCC staff administered 16 guardianship certification written examinations on October 23, 2019
- JBCC staff administered 36 oral Licensed Court Interpreter examinations on November 11, November 13, and November 14, 2019
- JBCC staff administered 59 written Licensed Court Interpreter examinations on November 19 and November 20, 2019

GUARDIANSHIP ABUSE, FRAUD EXPLOITATION DETERRENCE PROGRAM (GAFEDP)

Since November 1, 2015, the Office of Court Administration (OCA) has managed the Guardianship Compliance Project (GCP) to provide additional resources to courts handling guardianship cases.

On September 1, 2019, pursuant to SB 31 (Zaffirini/Smithee), OCA initiated the Guardianship Abuse, Fraud, and Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP) to aid the Courts relating to guardianship matters. Guardianship compliance specialists will assist in reviewing guardianship files to identify reporting deficiencies by guardians; auditing annual accountings and report their findings back to the Judge; and report to the courts any concerns of potential abuse, fraud or financial exploitation being committed against a ward under guardianship. The program is offered at no expense to the county.

- OCA will also maintain an electronic database to monitor filings of inventories, guardian of the person reports, and annual accountings.
- Courts are required to participate in the program if selected. Courts may apply to OCA to participate.
- The OCA director may notify the Judicial Conduct Commission of any concerns with judges who fail to act upon concerns raised by compliance specialists.

OCA will file annual reports on January 1 of each year including number of courts involved, number of guardianships reviewed, number of cases out of statutory compliance, number of cases reported to courts concerning potential issues, and status of technology developed to monitor guardianship cases.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUARDIANSHIP ABUSE FRAUD AND EXPLOITATION DETERRENCE PROGRAM (GAFEDP)

While the reforms implemented to date have improved the guardianship system in Texas, a key to the reforms' success is ensuring compliance with the laws and reviewing guardianship activities to spot potential abuse, fraud, and exploitation. To provide a safety net for all vulnerable persons under the care of guardians, the Judicial Council proposed expanding the GCP statewide as proposed in OCA's legislative appropriations request and SB 31 (86th R.S., Zaffirini et al). OCA is in the process of hiring the additional personnel necessary to monitor cases throughout the state.

MONITORING AND AUDITS

The annual reports of the well-being and the financial annual accounts should be monitored, and a sample of the reports should be audited to ensure that the data submitted is complete and accurate. Monitoring and auditing would also create a deterrence against theft and fraud.

DEVELOPMENT OF A STATEWIDE ONLINE GUARDIANSHIP REPORTING PORTAL

The OCA has been developing an automated, electronic tool for filing required reports, annual accountings and other documents in guardianship cases. This system will provide a method to notify courts when required reports are delinquent and to review annual accounting reports for potentially fraudulent activities.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES FOR COURTS AND CLERKS

Only by pro-actively training court personnel and proposed guardians on the fiduciary duties of guardianship, as well as auditing reports and accountings to detect and deter fraud and exploitation, will Texas be adequately braced to ensure the safety and well-being of this vulnerable and growing population. In addition to our online training of guardians on fiduciary record-maintenance and reporting duties, ongoing training and professional development is recommended for court and clerk staff on the collection and reporting of required guardianship data, as well as training on the fiduciary duties of guardians to inform the direction and guidance of proposed guardians.

Team members meet weekly and have been training on program procedures and compliance case reviews. The team also continues to conduct interviews for the program new positions while proceeding with program implementation by finalizing procedures, financial workbook, creating an internal webpage, and training schedules for the new employees. Additionally, the team worked on user acceptance testing for the guardianship online reporting system and met with the project team on the overall development of the system. Seventeen counties have requested GAFEDP assistance.

Our mission is to assist the courts in protecting our most vulnerable citizens and their assets.

Guardianship Compliance Project (GCP) Data Findings	as of December 2019
Courts and Counties Involved in the GCP	62/45
Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed by the GCP	35,110
Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure	18,713
Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified	15,423

<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports</i>	34%
<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings</i>	46%
<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories</i>	33%
<i>Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance</i>	40%
Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified	3,654

GAFEDP RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

- Continued the implementation of Senate Bill 31 statewide by coordinating the ongoing management of program implementation, training and procedures development, financial workbook development and data collection.
- Continued with interviews for the additional positions. Once hired, staff begin the training process.
- Continued work in Harris County and finalized Bee, Houston, Medina, and San Jacinto Counties.
- Planned for implementation in Webb County for annual accounting processes
- Developed the GAFEDP organizational chart
- Developed to GAFEDP workflow process chart
- Developing GAFEDP procedures, process and training (phase #1, phase #2 and phase #3) including the financial workbook and report to the courts.
- Continuing to develop the GAFEDP guardianship online reporting system. Planning pilot project in Cameron and Montgomery Counties.
- GAFEDP Travis, Montgomery, and Harris County Auditor Training

PROJECT UPDATE-ENTERPRISE PLANNING OFFICE (EPO)

The OCA has created the Enterprise Planning Office within OCA to manage our diverse internal and external portfolio of projects. The goal of our EPO and our project management team is to assist the OCA in properly planning, executing, and delivering projects throughout the agency. Below are the Legislatively Mandated Projects currently managed by the EPO.

These legislative projects have been assigned a project manager and project sponsor. The project managers are all currently developing user and subject matter lists and building requirements and working with the OCA Information Services Division to implement the projects in a timely manner.

Uniform Case Management – HB 1 (Zerwas/Nelson)

The legislature allocated funding to OCA to procure a cloud-based uniform case management system. OCA intends the system to be of no-cost to counties and will be targeted at counties with less than 20,000 in population. The system would be standards-based and would automate the transmission of data to various state and national databases. The system would be opt-in (rather than mandatory). The project manager has been assigned and a user/SME group formed to work on this project. OCA anticipates the system being live for county use in the Fall of 2020.

Service of Citation by Publication On-line - SB 891 (Huffman/Leach)

Currently, service of citation by publication occurs in local newspapers. This method is becoming more expensive and questions have arisen about the utility of such service. Under SB 891, OCA is required to establish a website that allows for service of citation by publication to occur via a website (in addition to service by publication in a newspaper or as an alternative to service by publication in certain circumstances where the cost is prohibitive or a newspaper is not available). The site is intended to be no additional cost to individuals or to the counties. OCA has hired a project

manager and is beginning work on this project as well. A project manager has been assigned and rules have been adopted by the Supreme Court necessary to implement this requirement that goes into effect in June.

Protective Order Registry - SB 325 (Huffman/Landgraf)

OCA is required to create a family violence protective order registry to allow law enforcement and the public to have a single source of protective order applications (viewable only to law enforcement) and granted final family violence protective orders (viewable by law enforcement and public). The orders will be available to the public when the victim opts-in to providing the order to the public. The project manager held the kickoff meeting in October, and the first user/SME group meeting has been held. Staff are in the process of developing requirements and working with the internal programmer/developer. The protective order registry will be live in the summer of 2020.

Settlement Agreement Database - HB 770 (S. Davis/Zaffirini)

OCA is required to create a settlement agreement database to house a copy of settlement agreements involving minors or incapacitated persons for safe keeping. OCA is authorized to charge a fee to cover the cost of this service. A project manager has been assigned and working with the sponsor and user group to implement this project. The database is expected to be live in the summer of 2020.

TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION (TFSC)

The Texas Legislature created the Texas Forensic Science Commission (“TFSC”) during the 79th Legislative Session by passing House Bill 1068 (the “Act”). The Act amended the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure to add Article 38.01, which describes the composition and authority of the TFSC. During subsequent legislative sessions, the Legislature further amended the Code of Criminal Procedure to clarify and expand the TFSC’s jurisdictional responsibilities and authority.

The TFSC has nine members appointed by the Governor of Texas. Seven of the nine commissioners are scientists and two are attorneys (one prosecutor and one defense attorney).

The TFSC has four main areas of responsibility:

- accreditation of crime laboratories and other entities that perform forensic analysis;
- designation of forensic disciplines for accreditation or exemption;
- investigation of allegations regarding professional negligence and misconduct; and
- the licensing of forensic analysts (beginning January 1, 2019).

The Legislature moved the TFSC’s administrative attachment to the Office of Court Administration during the 85th Legislative Session.

The TFSC’s most recent quarterly meeting was held on January 31, 2020. Commissioners considered a variety of matters including complaints against laboratories, laboratory self-disclosures of internal non-conformities, accreditation reports, licenses issued pursuant to the forensic analyst licensing program, statewide resolution of emerging issues in DNA mixture interpretation, and a partnership with the National Institute of Standards and Technology to review and adopt OSAC standards and guidelines in Texas crime laboratories. The Commission also hired Robert Miller, a senior staff attorney whose primary responsibility will be to coordinate subject matter experts in the development of a Forensic Bench Book that will be available to judges and updated regularly. By offering this resource, the Commission hopes to assist the judiciary in: 1) understanding foundational scientific principles; 2) identifying unsettled areas/areas of debate within forensic disciplines; and 3) identifying red flags in an evaluation of scientific evidence that may come before a court. All Commission quarterly meetings are open to the public and livestreamed with the support of OCA’s IT division.