



TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

205 WEST 14TH STREET, SUITE 600
TOM C. CLARK BUILDING
(512) 463-1625 | FAX (512) 463-1648
P.O. BOX 12066 | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2066

MAY 2022

CHAIR:

Hon. Nathan L. Hecht, Chief Justice, Supreme Court

VICE CHAIR:

Hon. Sharon Keller, Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Megan LaVoie

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TECHNOLOGY & DATA

TECHNOLOGY RESPONSE TO COVID (AND BEYOND)

In March 2022, OCA renewed the statewide judicial subscription to Zoom to provide continued support for virtual hearings. OCA made zConnect.io available to all interested judges. This tool allows participants in virtual hearings to pre-register, indicate their role, and indicate if an interpreter is needed. This saves court staff time by not having to identify participants that are either coming to the virtual hearing by phone or that use a default device name as the name of the participant. Soon, participating courts will have the ability to add their docket information from an export from their case management systems.

OCA continues to make iPads available for counties interested in conducting virtual jury trials, grand jury selections, or other court operations requiring technology.

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 540,000 users and handles 39,000 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.

eFiling is mandatory for attorneys in all criminal, civil, family, and probate cases at the district/county level and above. Currently there are 166 JPs across 43 counties that accept eFilings on a permissive basis. 15 additional JPs are actively working to accept eFilings.

Since the last meeting, the following eFiling initiatives have been completed:

- Statewide rollout of the Automated Certificate of Service
- Statewide rollout of the updated state EFSP and clerk review tools that no longer use Microsoft Silverlight
- Implementation of fee structure and changes from SB41
- Implementation of eFiling Insights to provide near real-time eFiling data to clerks and court administrators

Over the next few months, Tyler Technologies will be completing Phase 1 of 4 of enhancements to the eFiling system. These enhancements are mainly behind the scenes, upgrading from ECF 4.01 to ECF 5. Texas will be the first in the nation to implement the new standard.

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.

The Court Security Division during this reporting quarter is addressing a small backlog of pre-pandemic courthouse assessments as the resumption of normal court activities and courthouse openings continue throughout the state.

The Court Security Division collaborated with our judicial training partners to facilitate virtual as well as in-person training evaluations to judges, and court administrators in matters involving court security strategies, personal security awareness, suggested mitigation approaches in courtroom and improvements, and recommendations.

The division is preparing the Annual Report to the Legislature providing a comprehensive overview of the State of Court Security in Texas Courthouses, highlighting training endeavors and resources provided from OCA, systemic courthouse security weaknesses and concerns, and recommended improvements to the judicial security landscape.

The Court Security Division:

- Conducted 87 courthouse assessments to date (with approximately 15 pending scheduling) and 13 judicial residential assessments.
- To date, processed 1,502 judicial officers' requests to have personal information redacted from state public view.
- Administratively processed and reported several judicial threats to DPS for appropriate follow-up.
- Participated in virtual judicial training conferences.
- Conducted virtual and in-person presentations before county and municipal court security committees, law enforcement, court support staff, judicial training entities; and
- Continued to report judicial threats and inappropriate communication to 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.

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.

In addition to the daily work of providing technical assistance, working on data quality, answering data requests, and providing data support to OCA and others, program staff were involved in the following activities during the last period:

Annual Statistical Report for the Texas Judiciary

- Completed the data checks and produced the 2021 report with layout assistance from the Creative Media Designer.

Judicial Turnover in Appellate and District Courts

- Compiled judicial salaries and turnover data in preparation for the Judicial Compensation Commission meeting and began work on the biennial Judicial Salaries and Turnover Report.

Other Reports

- Made routine updates to the list of [Hate Crimes](#), [Jury Charges and Sentences in Capital Cases](#), and [Vexatious Litigants](#) as reports were received.
- Produced the following reports:
 - [Presiding Judges](#)
 - [Writs of Attachment](#)
 - [Judicial Bypass Cases](#)
 - [Appointments and Fees](#)

Data and Data Analysis

- Ran numerous monthly queries and compiled statistics for internal and external stakeholders/requestors on the effects of the COVID pandemic on filings, dispositions, clearance rates; backlogs by case type, case category, county, and court level; evictions; and jury trials.
- Held several meetings with non-profit organizations regarding eviction data.
- Produced 4 data analyses for new district courts and county courts at law. Met with county officials to discuss the Bastrop County analysis.
- Analyzed and presented data for the annual Council of Presiding Judges meeting.
- Drafted 3 quarterly proposals for transfer of cases among the courts of appeals and produced data and analyses for various related requests.
- Submitted 2020 trial court data to the National Center for State Courts' annual Court Statistics Project.

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- Sent data on a periodic basis to the National Center for State Courts for its Pandemic Dashboard project.
- Consulted with the Public Policy Research Institute (Texas A&M University) about the structure and meaning of OCA's trial court data that was provided to them for use in the Texas Indigent Defense Commission's Smart Defense website project.
- Participated in 2 Conference of State Court Administrators' Court Statistics Committee meetings.
- Met with staff of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Pretrial Reporting Program Project to discuss Texas data.
- Implemented [House Bill 1540](#), which added solicitation of prostitution to the Judicial Council monthly reporting requirements.
- Implemented Judicial Council monthly reporting requirements established by [Senate Bill 6 related to bail](#).

Judicial Directory

- Updated the directory and various documents related to court structure and jurisdiction as the result of new courts that were created in September 2021 and January 2022.
- Began annual directory updates in preparation of the 2022 Judicial Directory publication.
- Sent judge demographic profile sheets to new judges.

Training and Presentations

- Presented at the 2022 County and District Clerk's Association of Texas Winter Conference on state reporting requirements.
- Presented to the Executive Forum for Criminal Justice Planners on criminal case filing trends and backlogs.
- Presented to the Judicial Commission on Mental Health's Data Committee about the reporting structure for trial court data and available data related to mental health.
- Presented to Judicial Council Committees on backlog trends and analyses.

Other Projects

- Worked on identifying data elements to collect for criminal, civil, family, child protection, probate, and juvenile case level data.
- Worked with the court services consultant, Information Services director, and project manager on developing requirements and conducting testing for the e-filing Insights program.

RESEARCH

In partnership with the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission, the Texas Office of Court Administration hired a full-time Senior Data Analyst. This analyst works in the Research section of the Research and Court Services Division. Research revolves around the child welfare system, court data, and implementation of various initiatives in partnership with the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission.

Research and Analyses:

- In depth evaluation of OCA's Child Protection Courts Management System (CPCMS).
- Preparation of data to study the effect of COVID-19 in child abuse and neglect cases and make recommendations to address the needs to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of children are met in a timely manner.
- Address data inquiries related to data available in CPCMS.
- Analyze impact of removals of children from their homes as a result of policy and legislative changes.

- Collaborate with the National Center for State Courts on a study related to virtual hearing in child protection cases.

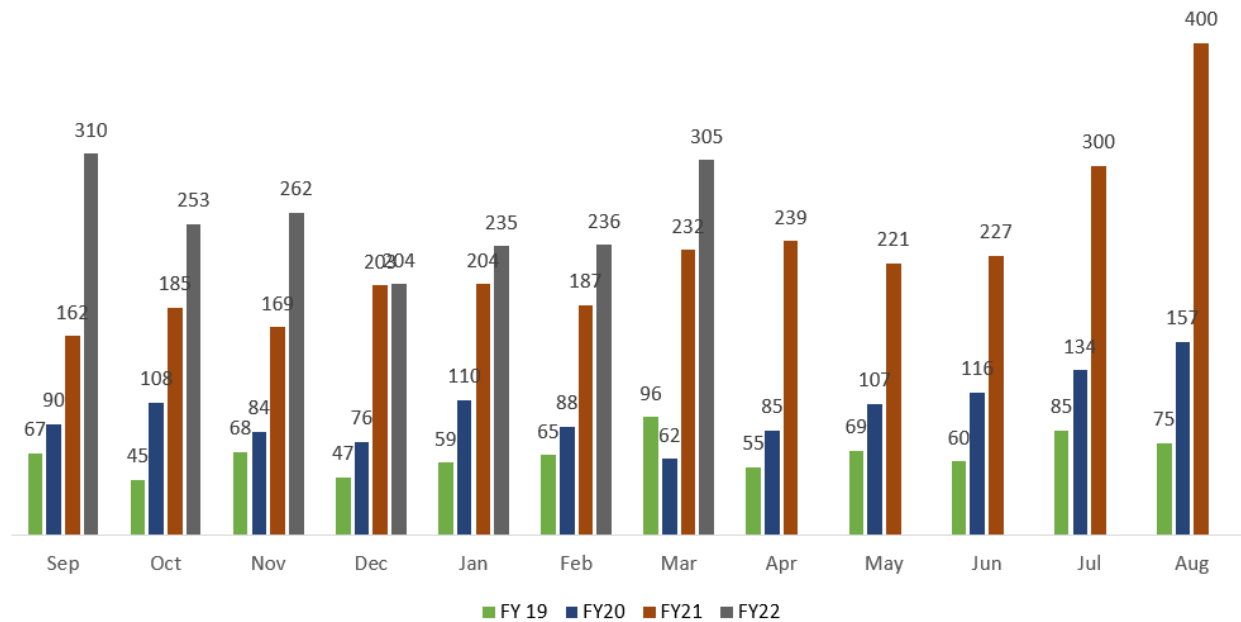
LANGUAGE ACCESS

OCA’s licensed court interpreters provide interpreting services via telephone and videoconference through the Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service (TCRIS). These services are available to our Texas Courts in all case types, for short, non-contested hearings that involve limited or no evidence. The Language Access Department staff also provides translation services as directed by OCA’s management as well as training and support to other interpreters who are contracted to interpret in magistration proceedings under Operation Lone Star. The demand for the OCA court interpreters has grown over the last two years and OCA was fortunate enough to hire an additional full-time interpreter, bringing the total number of staff in Language Access to three.

In ensuring that justice continues to be served to all Texans in the current pandemic situation and with OCA’s introduction of the remote proceedings capability through Zoom, the Language Access staff interpreters continued providing services through this platform as well as other videoconference systems that courts are using at this time such as Cisco, LifeSize, Skype, Teams and WebEx.

From August 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, TCRIS staff provided interpreting services in 2,205 hearings of which 2,132 were via video (Zoom, Teams, WebEx, etc.) in 99 counties. The chart below shows how the demand for OCA’s Remote Interpreter Services has increased dramatically year-over-year since 2019.

Number of Interpreted Sessions by Month



PRETRIAL AND BAIL

Pretrial is not a new area of work for OCA and the State of Texas, but it is a new addition to the Research and Court Services Division. OCA was tasked with a monumental project as a result of Senate Bill 6 from the 2nd called Special Session of the 87th Legislature. The agency hired two new FTEs to assist implementing the bill.

The Damon Allen Act (SB6) pertains to procedures for setting bail, requirements for monetary or personal bonds, duties of magistrates and officials taking bail bonds, and reporting of information related to bail bonds. The OCA was required to implement a statewide public safety report system and make the system available to all magistrates who set bail in each jurisdiction at no cost. The magistrates must consider a public safety report when setting bail for all defendants charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher offense.

Other requirements of the bill include additional data elements regarding bail and pretrial release which must be reported by District and County Clerks and stipulations for charitable bail organizations.

The [Public Safety Report System](#) successfully launched on April 1, 2022. At the time of publication of this report, the system has over 5,300 registered user of the system. OCA has conducted a number of Q&A and training sessions to ensure that users across the state were provided with as much information necessary to use the system. OCA will continue to listen to user feedback about enhancements and changes that will benefit all users. For more information, inquiries can be sent to bail@txcourts.gov. In addition, a plethora of information and resources has been posted on the [OCA website](#).

OTHER COURT SERVICES

Since the last Judicial Council meeting, the Court Services Division and its Court Consultant have been assisting courts across the state through the following projects:

Court Process Reviews Performed:

- City of Alpine- Creation of a Jury Plan for the Municipal Court adopted by the City Council.
- McLennan County- assisted with determining the most efficient use of the implementation of a new court.
- Wood County- Reviewed and assisted in analysis of civil cases related to criminal matters, determining the best approach to address backlog.
- Additional responsibilities/projects included:
 - ✓ Mental Health Reporting maintenance of guide and assistance with questions related to NICS
 - ✓ Participated in training/webinar/workshops for SB 6.
 - ✓ Presentment of presentation and assistance with the Citation by Publication, Citation through social media and Protective Order Database fielding questions and assisting clerks.
 - ✓ eFileTexas 2.0 assisting with testing, meetings and evaluating the product with Tyler Tech and Sam Levario-project manager.
 - ✓ Uniform Case Management System assisting in reviewing and development of systems for adoption of counties of 20,000 and under with Davon Greeno as the Project Manager.
 - ✓ Case Data Reporting evaluation team, assisting with reviewing the data elements captured at the court level and data wanted for reporting purposes.
 - ✓ Continued updates to general recommendations and “Best Practices” to address court backlog due to the pandemic.

- ✓ Assisted National Center for State Courts in gathering data for court study related to virtual hearings that included courts from the following counties: Harris, Travis, Fort Bend and Lubbock.
- ✓ Attendance at meetings and presentation of selected subject matter related to courts and clerks including escheating Funds, SB 6, Service, OCA updates, Legislative updates, Juvenile records, etc.

Civil Justice Initiative Expedited Actions Training

In March 2021, OCA worked with the National Center for State Courts and the Institute for the Advancement of American Legal Systems, to produce a three part webinar series covering the Amendments to the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, which became effective on January 1, 2021, including rules governing expedited actions. The Texas Office of Court Administration invited county and district court teams to participate in a special training opportunity on effective implementation strategies to improve civil case processing. The training offered strategies to help county and district courts manage existing backlogs and prepare for an expected increase in civil filings.

To continue the work in Expedited Actions Rules, OCA is partnering with IAALS and NCSC to conduct data research into a sampling of 2,500 civil cases from across the state to determine how these cases were impacted by the rules and if the time standards had positive impacts on the resolution of these cases. This study will continue for the remainder of the year, with a goal of publishing findings by December 2022.

Weighted Caseload Study

Amongst many other projects, OCA is planning to re-kickoff a weighted caseload study that was originally scheduled to occur in the Spring of 2020. The 86th Legislature in Senate Bill 891 (2019, Regular Session) directed OCA to contract with the National Center for State Courts to conduct a study of the caseloads of the district and statutory county courts. The pandemic unfortunately put a pause on the study and OCA is hopeful the study can kick off in late Fall.

Child Welfare Courts Evaluation

During this period, another great project came to completion. Texas had been participating in an in-depth study of an evaluation of virtual child welfare hearings. Anecdotally, courts report both positive and negative experiences with virtual child welfare hearings. There is, however, limited research on the experience of youth and families in virtual hearings or the extent to which the virtual courtroom impacts the ability to conduct quality hearings.

Researchers observed virtual hearings and collected data through activities including electronic surveys and virtual focus groups. The report that was published focused on how virtual hearings in our state are going with regard to the experiences of youth and families and informs the national conversation about best practices in virtual hearings and helping to shape the research agenda around virtual child welfare hearings. The report and other relevant research can be [found here](#).

Remote Hearings Workload Evaluation

During this period, the research on Remote Hearings and its effect on the judicial workload was completed and published: <https://www.ncsc.org/newsroom/public-health-emergency/texas-remote-hearings>.

[This December 2021 report](#) is the first national review of data that confirms what judges have anecdotally shared about remote hearings before and during the pandemic. The 12-month study analyzed both 1.25 million minutes of judicial data and focus group feedback from judges and court leaders in eight counties across Texas. The NCSC study, supported with funding from the State Justice Institute, found that remote proceedings take about a third longer than in-person hearings largely due to technology-related issues and lack of preparation by participants. But the study also

found that remote proceedings take longer because they increase access to justice, as litigants can more easily attend and participate in hearings.

The report concluded with nine recommendations:

1. Judicial leadership should generate guidelines regarding how best to determine when a court proceeding should be conducted in-person or remotely.
2. Judges and court administration should determine the most effective way to schedule hearings that provide for the greatest efficiency in the court, while also being mindful of litigants' time.
3. Remote court participants will benefit from clearly delineated instructions and expectations for hearings.
4. Court systems should develop clearly written (and other formats) instructions for remote proceedings on courtroom decorum and expectations of litigants, including timeliness, dress code, and appropriate places from which to log into a hearing.
5. Before any hearing, the court should ensure that all required paperwork and agreements between parties have been appropriately completed.
6. Courts should not assume that all parties have access to the proper equipment (e.g., computers, tablets, smart phones) necessary to participate in remote court proceedings. If individuals do not have access to the appropriate technology, courts should make such equipment available to court users in a safe and easily accessible location.
7. When interpreters are used, the court should ensure that the non-English-speaking litigant's attorney has briefed the interpreter on the case and how to use the communication system.
8. Court systems should find ways to preempt judicial burnout from holding lengthy sets of back-to-back remote hearings. Judges should be encouraged to take regular breaks during and between hearings.
9. Since remote hearings appear to be permanent, court systems should consider hiring "technical bailiffs" or additional court staff responsible for setting hearing links, scheduling parties, contacting parties before the hearings, and addressing technical issues that arise during remote hearings.

Centers of Excellence

The Centers of Excellence program is still active and improving. Onsite evaluations are tentatively being considered, while keeping in mind the ongoing health considerations. New courts continue to show interest in becoming recognized .

SPECIALTY COURTS

CHILDREN'S COURTS PROGRAM

Since the last report, the Research and Court Services Division (RCS) partnered with the Supreme Court's Children's Commission (Children's Commission) and the Department of Family Protective Services Prevention and Early Intervention Team (PEI) to launch a pilot project creating and supporting Early Intervention Court Liaisons (EICLs) to be placed in identified Child Protection Courts (CPCs).

In early 2021, PEI proposed an investment to support EICLs in identified Child Protection Courts (CPCs). PEI initially partnered with the Children's Commission to identify Texas communities with PEI-funded programs and that were at high risk for child maltreatment. The identified communities based upon child maltreatment risk numbers are Bell County, Galveston County, and Lubbock County. PEI earmarked \$300,000 in state funds to support 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE) staff in each identified community. Bell and Lubbock Counties each have two CPCs. One liaison will

serve both courts in those counties. PEI contracted with the Office of Court Administration (OCA) in the Fall of 2021 to post, hire, and oversee the EICL positions. OCA hired the EICL for Galveston County in December 2021 with a start date of March 1, 2022 and the EICLs for Bell County in March 2022 with a start date of April 15, 2022. Efforts are still underway to hire an EICL for Lubbock County. The Children’s Courts Program Manager will supervise the EICLs and be responsible for reporting deliverables to PEI on a quarterly basis. PEI will work with the Children’s Commission and OCA to provide support, training, and technical assistance to the EICLs who will act as special assistants to the court, including conducting regular learning collaborative sessions with child welfare stakeholders, working to identify and connect early childhood and family support programs to the local CPCs, and serve as conveners within their communities to offer a judicial perspective in community stakeholder meetings. They will also identify local services that will align with eligible Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) services. The initial project term is September 1, 2021-August 30, 2023.

The RCSD Director and Children’s Courts Program Manager continued to work with the Children’s Commission on several initiatives including the Race Equity Workgroup, CPS Mediation Workgroup, study of virtual CPS hearings, and data sharing with the Department of Family Protective Services Child Protective Services (DFPS-CPS). The Children’s Commission Program Manager continues to serve as the singular point-of-contact for OCA CPCs and Child Support Courts (CSCs) across the State providing support and technical assistance.

SPECIALTY/PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

The Specialty Courts Program Manager, also serving as 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 and federal governmental and non-profit agencies and other stakeholders.

Effective September 2019, OCA obtained oversight authority of Texas Specialty Courts. Specialty Courts are required to register with the OCA prior to operating by submitting required documentation for official acknowledgement. The SPCC accepts, reviews, and processes registration documents. Since the last report, Specialty Courts in Comal, El Paso, Hays, Hidalgo, and Williamson Counties were registered. The SPCC worked on compiling and reconciling data to update the list of registered Specialty Courts for submission to the National Drug Court Resource Center (NDCRC) for inclusion in its annual publication of treatment courts nationwide and posting on OCA’s webpage. The NDCRC supports the design, implementation, expansion, and enhancement of treatment court programs through the dissemination of information, creation of resources, engagement in research, and collaboration with partner agencies. For more information visit the website - <https://ndcrc.org/>.

The SPCC continued to attend Statewide Problem-Solving Court Coordinators meetings hosted by the Center for Court Innovation, to discuss each state’s courts response to the pandemic and to share ideas on how to operate moving forward.

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. 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 **6,690** court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians and guardianship programs, process servers, and licensed court interpreters. The JBCC also

registers all guardianships statewide, provides training, and provides criminal histories to the courts for the proposed guardians. Hon. Sid Harle serves as the chair of the JBCC.

Profession	Type	Number of Certifications, Registrations, Licenses
Court Reporters	Certification	2208
Apprentice Court Reporters	Certification	8
Provisional Court Reporters	Certification	7
Court Reporting Firms	Registration	203
(50%+) CSR Owned Firms	Registration	61
Guardians	Certification	368
Provisional Guardians	Certification	98
Guardianship Program	Registration	27
Process Servers	Certification	3256
Court Interpreters-Basic	License	57
Court Interpreters-Master	License	397
TOTAL		6690

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.

In June 2018, OCA implemented an online system to register every guardianship in the state prior to appointment. As a registration prerequisite, the OCA conducts a criminal history background check and provides online training to proposed guardians. Since June 1, 2018, our registration team has processed the following.

Data Received for Proposed Guardians Registration	Guardianship Training Completed (English & Spanish):	Criminal Histories Provided to the Courts:
51,696	26,970	20,064

RECENT MEETINGS OF THE JBCC AND ADVISORY BOARDS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

JBCC meetings are conducted quarterly throughout the year. The Commission met on August 6, 2021, November 5, 2021 and February 4, 2022. The next meeting of the Commission is May 6, 2022.

The Court Reporters Certification Advisory Board met on August 12, 2021.

The Court Reporters Uniform Format Manual Committee met on February 23, 2022. The next meeting is April 6, 2022.

The Guardians Certification Advisory Board met on February 10, 2022.

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 2022, 44 complaints have been filed with the JBCC Compliance team and are in process or resolved:

- 16 court reporters
- 23 process servers
- 5 guardians

The following JBCC Complaint Review Committees met:

- Court Reporters Complaint Review Committee, May 14, 2021, and December 3, 2021
- Process Server Complaint Review Committee, December 10, 2021, March 4, 2022, and March 18, 2022
- Guardians Complaint Review Committee, June 29, 2021, July 13, 2021, and October 12, 2021

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.

We are currently administering the Court Reporter examinations online. We have also developed an online examination, by way of the Sam Houston State University Blackboard platform, to administer Guardianship Certification and Licensed Court Interpreter written examinations online. The first round of online exams was administered in February of 2022. JBCC staff administered the following exams this fiscal year:

Certification or License Program	Exams Administered	Dates Administered
Licensed Court Interpreters-Oral Exam	30	November 16, 2021- *February 01, 2022
Licensed Court Interpreters-Written Exam	71	November 30, 2021- **February 08, 2022

- (*) 11 exams were administered in El Paso in February 2022.
- (**) 43 exams were administered online via Blackboard in February 2022.
- Registration for the April 19, 2022, Guardian Certification written exams is still open, so no data is available yet.
- Registration for the June 07, 2022, Licensed Court Interpreter oral exams is still open, so no data is available yet.
- Registration for the June 14, 2022, Licensed Court Interpreter written exams is still open, so no data is available yet.

GUARDIANSHIP ABUSE, FRAUD EXPLOITATION DETERRENCE PROGRAM (GAFEDP)

On September 1, 2019, the OCA implemented the GAFEDP to provide resources to the courts relating to monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters pursuant to SB 31 & HB 1286 (Zaffirini/Smithee). Our team of auditor's review guardianship cases to identify reporting deficiencies by guardians, audit annual accountings, and report to the courts any concerns of potential abuse, fraud, or financial exploitation. We currently have one manager, two trainers, and 15 program auditors assigned statewide.

The program is offered at no expense to counties throughout the state. Courts throughout the state are required to participate in the program if selected and may also request program participation. Additionally, the OCA director may notify the Judicial Conduct Commission of any concerns involving judges who fail to act upon concerns raised by compliance specialists. On January 1, 2022, the GAFEDP issued the [2021 annual report](#) to the Texas Legislature.

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

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 COURT CLERKS

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.

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

GAFEDP Overall Data Findings	as of March 30, 2022
Courts and Counties Involved in the GAFEDP and GCP	200/160
Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed GCP/GAFEDP	62,632
Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure	29,965
Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified	26,297
<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports</i>	26%
<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings</i>	41%
<i>Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories</i>	38%
<i>Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance</i>	33%
Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified	6,203

GAFEDP RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

- Our GAFEDP Manger participated in the revision of the 2022 [NACM Guardianship Guide](#). Thanks to Rebecca for participating the development of this nationwide comprehensive guardianship resource.
- Our Team met with researchers contracted to work with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct an environmental scan of guardianship and conservatorship abuse and fraud, identify opportunities to advance knowledge through research or data collection, and write reports and a summary overview based on our findings to inform future NIJ and/or Department of Justice (DOJ) on research and data collection.
- The team continued finalizing the GAFEDP financial accounting audit procedures with the goal of implementing in counties soon.
- The GAFEDP team has implemented the pilot project for the guardianship online reporting system in Montgomery County. The team finalized the financial workbook procedures with training for the audit team.
- The GAFEDP now has 18 team members currently working in numerous counties in various stages.
- Continuing to develop the GAFEDP guardianship online reporting system.

PROJECT UPDATE-ENTERPRISE PLANNING OFFICE (EPO)

The Enterprise Planning Office (EPO) manages agency projects within OCA. Our goal is to plan, execute, and deliver projects statewide. Our four project managers guide the projects by collaborating with SMEs, stakeholders, and project team members to develop requirements and implement projects. The EPO also manages the agency contract management process.

Public Safety Report System – SB6 (Huffman/Smithee)

The Second Called Session of the 87th Legislature (2021), enacted [Senate Bill 6](#) which requires the Office of Court Administration (OCA) to develop a statewide Public Safety Report System and requires magistrates who set bail for defendants charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher category offense to consider a public safety report generated by the Public Safety Report System. The bill also requires any magistrate, judge, sheriff, peace officer or jailer who sets bail under Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure, for a defendant charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher category offense to complete a bail form and to promptly (but no later than 72 hours) submit it to OCA through the Public Safety Report System. Project Update: OCA selected Automon as the vendor to develop the Public Safety Report System (PSRS). The PSRS went live on April 1, 2022, and generates a public safety report with respect to a defendant for magistrates to consider before setting bail for defendants charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher category offense, 2) provides the bail form that must be completed by magistrates, judges, sheriffs, peace officers and jailers who set bail under Chapter 17, Code of Criminal Procedure, for a defendant charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher category offense, and 3) provides a system/process for the bail form to be submitted to OCA.

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. The project team worked with user groups and subject matter experts to develop user stories and system requirements. Project Update: The Project kicked off on September 1, 2021. The project team is currently working requirements gathering and system testing with the selected vendors for the early adopters in Crane and Brewster counties.

Court Reminder Program- HB 4293

House Bill 4293, of the 87th legislative session directs OCA to develop and make available to each county at no cost a Court Reminder Program, that allows counties statewide to send text messages to notify defendants of a scheduled court appearance. The OCA team has been working on preliminary research relating the project requirements, scope, and budget.

Case Level Data Project-OCA Project

The Judiciary, the Legislature, state agencies, and other entities have a need to access consolidated statewide case level data to augment their policy decisions, adjust to criminal and civil trends in courts and provide comprehensive statewide reporting. Court case level data is currently stored within jurisdictions and not consolidated at a statewide level. The project will create a centralized judicial data warehouse that will allow both judicial staff and the public to access statewide case level information for statistical reporting and analysis. The Judiciary, the Legislature, state agencies, and other public and non-public entities have a critical need to analyze and report on statewide case level data. High level summary level data is currently reported to the OCA, but it does not provide the level of detail to effectively support government policy decisions. This project would provide consolidated rich data at a detail level that will allow for business intelligence and analysis to meet the growing need for detailed analysis and reporting.

TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION (TFSC)

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 five 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;
- adoption and regulation of a Code of Professional Responsibility; and
- the licensing of forensic analysts.

The TFSC held its most recent quarterly meeting on January 21, 2022. Commissioners considered a variety of matters including complaints against laboratories, laboratory self-disclosures of internal non-conformities, accreditation reports, and licenses issued pursuant to the forensic analyst licensing program. In the past year, the Commission released investigative reports in five matters. In three of the matters, the Commission issued a finding of professional misconduct. The Commission currently has pending investigations in the following disciplines: DNA mixture interpretation; toxicology; firearm/toolmark analysis; sexual assault nurse examination.

To date, the Commission has licensed approximately 1,352 forensic analysts since the inception of its licensing program, January 1, 2019. The Commission recently co-hosted a workshop by Dr. Itiel Dror on cognitive bias in forensic science that reached over 400 forensic analysts in Texas. The Commission is working with Judge Barbara Hervey of the Court of Criminal Appeals and the Bexar County District Attorney's office on the development of DNA training for lawyers and judges. The Commission continues to work with representatives from the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science and accredited crime laboratories on implementation of consensus standards in various forensic science disciplines.