

Shared Solutions 2.0 – Standards of a High-Performing Court



In January 2012, the first Shared Solutions Summit brought together trial courts of varying levels to discuss common problems and potential solutions. This was a collaborative project started by Chief Justice Jefferson and the Texas Judicial Council, working in partnership with the Texas Conference of Urban Counties, with support (financial or in-kind) from the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Supreme Court Children’s Commission, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC), the Judicial Committee on Information Technology, the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center, the Texas Center for the Judiciary, the Texas Association of Counties, the Texas Access to Justice Commission, the National Center for State Courts, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the State Justice Institute.

The agenda was loosely based on the annual Task Force on Indigent Defense (now the TIDC) workshop. The idea was to convene local teams of judges, district attorneys, private lawyers, clerks, and other actors in five key program areas: criminal courts, mental health courts, child protection courts, civil courts handling self-represented litigants, and limited jurisdiction courts handling juvenile Class C cases. The program was highly successful and resulted in dramatic improvements in the attendees’ courts.¹

Based upon the success of the Shared Solutions Summit, the Judicial Council proposes to extend the concept further through *Shared Solutions 2.0 – Competencies of a High Performing Texas Court*.

Developing an ISO 9000 type standard for Texas Courts

The ISO 9000 family of standards are well-recognized in the private sector as a top-level certification for which the entity must strive. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) develops and publishes the international standards and describes the ISO 9000 family of standards as:

“address[ing] various aspects of quality management” and “provid[ing] guidance and tools for companies and organizations who want to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer’s requirements, and that quality is consistently improved.”²

There are multiple standards within the IS 9000 family of standards, including:

- ISO 9001:2008 – sets out the requirements of a quality management system;
- ISO 9000:2005 – covers the basic concepts and language;

¹ More information on the projects and results can be found at <http://www.courts.state.tx.us/tjc/Shared-Solutions.asp>.

² Retrieved from www.iso.org/iso/iso_9000 on August 24, 2012.

- ISO 9004: 2009 – focuses on how to make a quality management system more efficient and effective; and
- IS 19011 – sets out guidance on internal and external audits of quality management systems.

Based upon these standards, over a million organizations worldwide have been independently certified as meeting the ISO 9001 standard.

The Texas Comptroller instituted a similar program of certification in December 2009 – the Texas Comptroller Leadership Circle – “to recognize local governments across Texas that are striving to meet a high standard for financial transparency online.”³ The Comptroller’s program has different levels of annual certification based upon four major criteria and twelve minor criteria. Only 37 out of 254 Texas counties received the Leadership Circle certification in 2012.

The Texas courts share a vision of providing the highest quality of justice available to Texans. To provide courts with a model for improvement, the Judicial Council seeks to develop an ISO-like standard for courts.

The following steps will be taken to accomplish this goal:

1. A roundtable of stakeholders from the judiciary, county officials, and other interested parties will meet in October to begin discussing what the competencies of a high performing Texas court entail.
2. Through an iterative process, the roundtable participants and other interested persons will continue throughout the fall and spring to finalize the competencies.
3. During the spring and summer, the group will begin to provide commentary on what the competencies are and how they should be measured.
4. During the fall of 2013, Shared Solutions 2.0 will be held where courts and county leaders will be invited to learn more about the competencies through educational training on the various competencies.
5. In 2014, the Judicial Council will develop and approve a certification process for each of the competencies and make the certification available to the Texas courts and local government.
6. Annual Shared Solutions Summits will be held to assist courts and local government to improve in various areas of the competencies and to highlight courts and counties who have achieved certification in one or more of the areas.

The Texas Judicial Council anticipates partnering with various national organizations, including the National Center for State Courts and the National Association for Court Management, to assist in the development of the competencies as a national model for other states.

³ For more information on the Comptroller’s program, visit www.texasparency.org/local/leadership.php.