

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 2016



Texas Judicial Council

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TECHNOLOGY & DATA

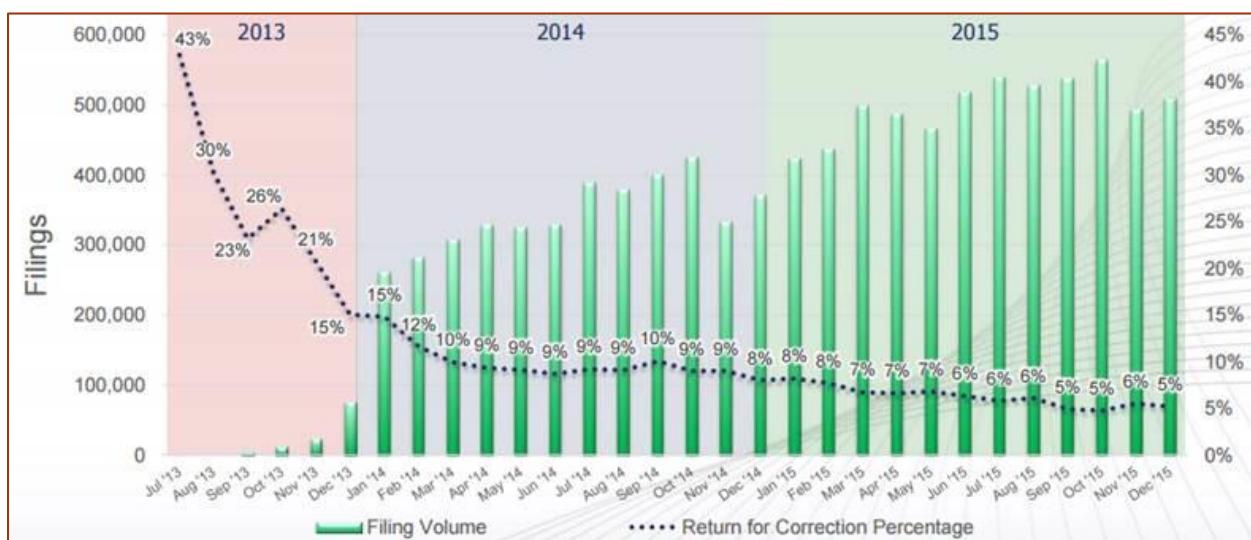
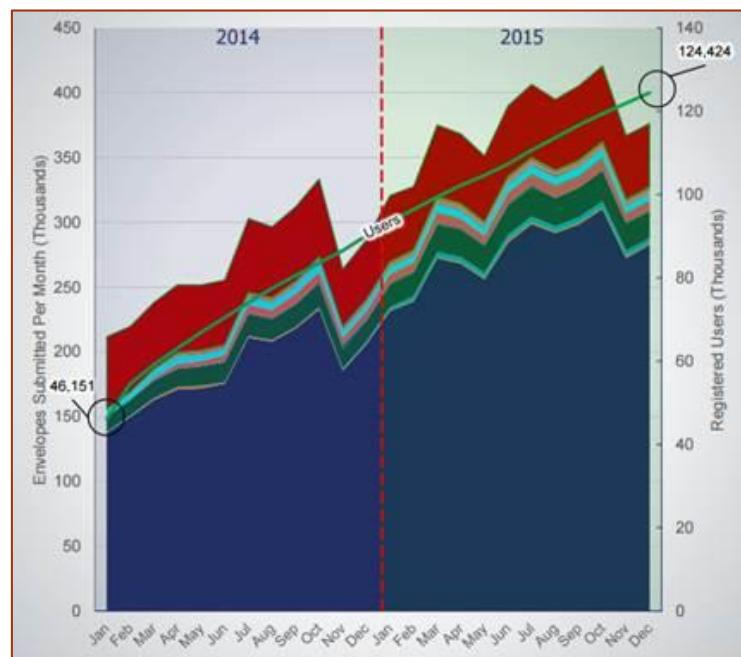
Information Services Division

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 five judicial branch state agencies. The division also provides staff to coordinate and facilitate the work of the Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT).

Civil e-Filing

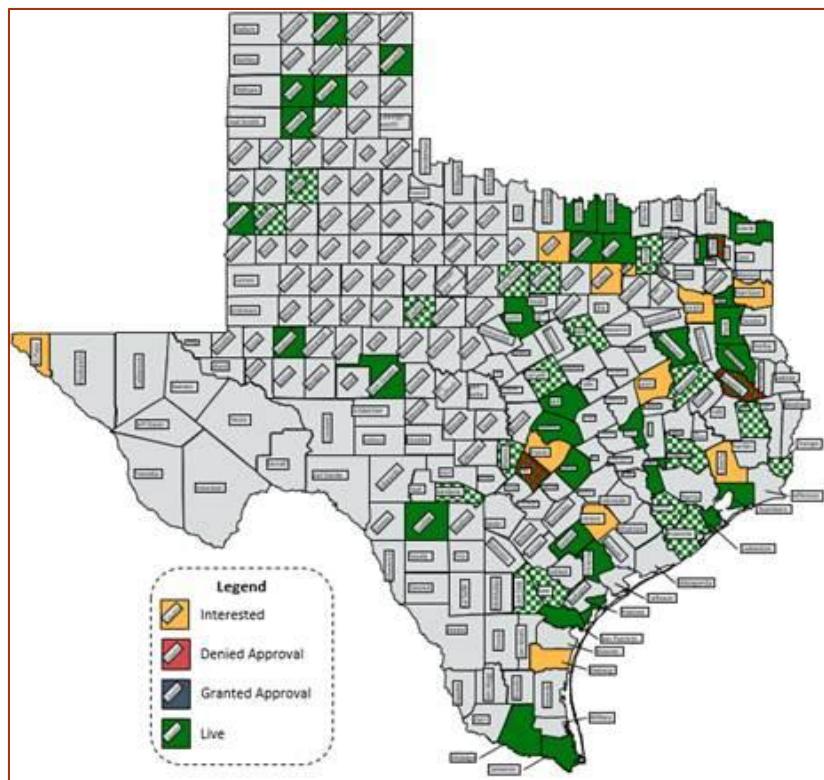
Civil e-Filing is now allowed in all 254 Texas counties and is mandatory in 118. The remaining 136 counties become mandatory on July 1. In 2015, filers filed **more than 7,000,000 documents electronically** through the system. This equates to a little more than 36,000,000 pieces of paper that didn't arrive last year at the clerk's office. These numbers are inline with the expected volume of the system.

Additionally, in 2015 there was a decline in the return for correction rate as well. As business processes adjusted to the electronic world and as attorney and clerk education continues to expand, **the return for correction rate declined to 5% in 2015.**



Criminal e-Filing

As of February 2016, **52 counties are live on criminal eFiling** for subsequent case filings. Tyler is working with an additional 71 counties to facilitate judicial approval and the implementation of criminal e-Filing. The current filing volume is currently low (500-600 documents daily). The Court of Criminal Appeals will be holding a hearing to discuss criminal e-Filing on April 5, 2016.



Other Information Services Projects

- Implementation of online self-represented litigant (SRL) form preparation tool – As part of the e-Filing platform, OCA has made available to the Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC) the ability to implement the Guide and File System. This system provides online interviews using plain language to assist SRLs in completing forms. The system is available for use at <http://selfhelp.efiletexas.gov>. Six interviews have been implemented including one that generates the Supreme Court approved forms for divorce with no children. TLSC has convened a workgroup to continue development of forms to be put onto this platform.
- Implementation of judicial access to electronic documents – Also part of the e-Filing platform, **JCIT unanimously recommended to the Supreme Court to continue the development and implementation of Registered Access to Court Electronic Records (RACER)**. This tool will allow judges that do not have technology, tools, or training to view electronic case records that flow through the e-Filing system. This tool will be especially helpful to more rural counties that may not have robust case management systems. It will also help judges that have a multi-county jurisdiction from the need to learn several different case management systems.

- Replacing licensing database – OCA’s software that manages the licensing provided by the Judicial Branch Certification Commission is outdated and in need of several modern features including the ability for licensees to review their records and renew/pay for licenses online. A request for offers is forthcoming on this project.
- Replacing court activity database – Over the last several legislative sessions, there has been an increased need for court data in order to satisfy court personnel, public, media and legislator requests. Frequently the data collected is not granular enough to provide significant value. The database is also archaic and in need of modern features. The new system would work to ease the reporting burden of local clerks, as well as enhance the ability for OCA research staff and the public to look at data about the courts.
- Ongoing enhancements to OCA-developed case management systems – OCA continues to enhance appellate case management (TAMES), as well as the child protection case management system (CPCMS) and the child support case management system (CSCCMS). All three systems have established governance groups the prioritize enhancement activities. The TAMES governance group continues to work with OCA to finalize requirements for the attorney portal into TAMES. This new portal will give attorneys appropriate and secure access to case files held by the appellate clerk.
- Infrastructure Upgrades – OCA is continuing to upgrade the judicial branch infrastructure. This includes upgrades to the appellate courts’ networks, servers and laptops/desktops. Additionally, OCA will be moving the courts to Office365, which gives better security and is more resilient in the event of a disaster.

RESEARCH & COURT SERVICES

Collection Improvement Program

Technical Support

OCA continues to assist counties and cities required to implement a collection improvement program (CIP) with either fully implementing a program or refining the processes of a previously implemented program.

The primary focus of the assistance provided to counties and cities by OCA’s CIP technical support staff has been to ensure their compliance with the critical components of the CIP. OCA’s goal is to ensure each jurisdiction passes the statutorily-required compliance audit. These audits were previously conducted by the Comptroller’s Office, but they are now the responsibility of OCA’s CIP audit staff. OCA’s CIP technical support staff works with each jurisdiction using a review format designed to identify problem areas and recommend corrections prior to the official audit. OCA’s CIP technical support staff also assists counties and cities that fail a compliance audit with developing and implementing a strategy for correcting the deficiencies contributing to the failed compliance audit. To date no jurisdiction has failed a second compliance audit.

- Detailed reviews of all 87 counties and cities required to implement a program have been completed. Of the total, 19 were audited by the Comptroller’s Office with all either passing their initial or subsequent official compliance audit; 37 have been audited by OCA’s CIP audit staff, with 33 passing (including the City of Grand Prairie, the City of Laredo, Kaufman County and McLennan

County which failed their initial audits but passed their follow-up audit) and nine failing their initial audit. Four of the eight failing jurisdictions (the City Laredo, the City of Grand Prairie, Kaufman County and McLennan County) have already passed a second audit. The Technical Assistance staff is assisting the remaining five jurisdictions (Bastrop, El Paso, Victoria, Orange, and Webb counties) address identified deficiencies.

Since September 1, 2015, OCA collections staff have:

- Conducted 34 “spot checks” of programs required to implement a program to ensure continuing compliance with program components;
- Compiled data for Return on Expenditure reports.
- Continued drafting policies and establishing procedures for managing temporary waivers of the CIP reporting requirement in certain situations.
- Continued drafting policies and establishing procedures for training and managing compliance with data verification audits tentatively scheduled to begin in FY 2016.

Also, since September 1, 2015, OCA collections staff has participated in the following training and assistance activities:

- Conducted regional collections training workshops in Longview, Midland, San Angelo, and San Antonio.
- Delivered collections-related presentations at the annual conference of the Texas County Auditors Association in Conroe, the Texas Municipal Court Education Center’s New Clerk’s School in Austin, and the National Conference on American Court Collections in Henderson, Nevada.
- Conducted corrective strategy meetings designed to assist jurisdictions that have failed a compliance audit to develop a plan to correct deficiencies for Victoria, Orange, and Webb counties.
- Staffed a Collections Improvement Program resource table at the Texas Justice Court Training Center judges and court staff schools in Austin, San Antonio, Galveston, and San Marcos.

Court Services Consultant

Providing Consulting Services

OCA’s Court Services Consultant continues to work with several counties on issues relating to caseflow management plan development and caseflow management plan compliance; file/record management and data reporting issues; and other court administration improvement initiatives, including those related to court costs and collections issues. These consulting services are provided by phone or in-person.

Providing Training

The Court Services Consultant staffed an OCA resource table at the Texas Association for Court Administration’s annual conference in November. Attendees at the conference had the opportunity to

meet informally with OCA staff on a wide variety of court management and case management issues. OCA staff also presented at the conference.

OCA's Court Services Consultant has been assisting the County and District Clerks Association of Texas and representatives from the University of Texas Law School to identify topics and speakers from within OCA to address their members at their January, April and June 2016 conferences.

Shared Solutions

OCA staff continue to support the development of the Judicial Council's *Shared Solutions* initiative. An updated model of supporting innovation and high performance in local courts and court systems is being developed to advance the Shared Solutions concepts.

Data Collection

Judicial Information Program

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, Texas Judicial System Directory, and other publications; and provides information about the judicial branch to the legislature, state and federal agencies, local governments, private associations and public interest groups, among others. More than 150,000 statistical and other reports were received in FY2015.

Annual Statistical Report of the Texas Judicial System

Staff compiled and analyzed court activity data to produce the [2015 Annual Statistical Report of the Texas Judicial System](#).

Texas Judicial System Directory

Judicial Information is engaged in the annual update of the [Judicial System Directory](#) information.

Legislative Changes affecting Data

Staff worked with Information Services to create a new database for the [reporting of parental notification](#) cases required by House Bill 3994 (effective January 1, 2016).

Monthly Court Activity Reports

A significant amount of time of the Judicial Information Program's staff is devoted to providing ongoing support to the trial courts and clerks and their information technology staff or case management vendors on reporting issues. Since the last Council meeting, staff made presentations at clerk education seminars held by the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center, the Texas Justice Courts Training Center, and the County and District Clerks' Association.

Evaluating Judicial Workload in Child Protection Cases

In July, OCA kicked off the Texas Child Protective Services Judicial Workload assessment project being funded by a grant from the Texas Children's Commission. The project is informed by the input of an 18-member Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) made up of judges and other child protection case

stakeholders. The time study portion of the workload assessment was conducted October 26 through November 22, 2015 by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). As a follow up, NCSC surveyed the judges who participated in the time study regarding their perspectives on whether the time currently spent on these cases is sufficient to reasonably perform judicial duties in all phases of a child protection case. The JNAC will meet February 24, 2016 to review the workload data gathered by NCSC.

Domestic Violence Resources Program

Protective Order Resource Attorney (PORA)

In response to the passage of HB 2455, OCA's [Protective Order Resource Attorney](#) (PORA) was appointed as the Chair of OCA's Task Force to promote uniformity in the collection and reporting of information relating to family violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. During the period, the PORA conducted the first meeting of the full Task Force along with several conference calls of the workgroups, which focused on data quality and uniformity surrounding protective orders, dating violence, criminal law, and human trafficking. OCA must deliver a report with recommendations on issues of data quality and uniformity to the governor and legislature no later than September 1, 2016.

On December 31, 2015, the federal funding for the PORA position ended. Beginning on January 1, 2016, the position became part-time.

In addition, during the period the PORA:

- Made presentations to new judges on magistrate's orders for emergency protection and OCA's NICS Protective Order Record Improvement Project for both the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center's New Judges School and the Texas Justice Court Training Center's New Justice of the Peace Stage II School. Both events occurred in Austin, Texas.
- Presented on family violence, Magistrate's Orders of Emergency Protection, TCIC reporting, and OCA's NICS Protective Order Record Improvement Project to clerks at the Region IV meeting of the County and District Clerks Association of Texas in Sonora, Texas.
- Presented on family violence, Magistrate's Orders of Emergency Protection, TCIC reporting, and OCA's NICS Protective Order Record Improvement Project to judges at the Texas Center for the Judiciary's Annual Judicial Education Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- Travelled to the National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, VA to attend the Violence Against Women Single Point of Contact Workshop.
- Travelled to New Orleans, LA to meet with the Director of the Louisiana Protective Order Registry, to discuss the program and the feasibility of implementing one in Texas.

Language Access

OCA's Language Access Program staff assists courts in developing and implementing language access plans; provides training on language access issues and best practices; and works with Texas colleges and universities to develop college-level court interpreter training programs in an effort to increase the pool of licensed court interpreters in the State. Language Access Program staff also provides free document translation services to courts and agency departments. Interpreter staff continue to provide interpretation services for courts across the state.

Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders

The Texas Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) continues to address guardianship policy and practice issues, assess the state's system of guardianship and alternatives, and serve as an ongoing forum for problem-solving and networking. The WINGS group met on August 14, 2015, and will be meeting again in March 2016. Assistant General Counsel Judy Speer is assigned as staff for WINGS. On September 15, 2015, Ms. Speer participated in the quarterly conference call with the Social Security Administration and nationwide WINGS representatives. The agenda included an overview of the organizational structure of the Social Security Administration and brief updates from all WINGS sites and regional representatives of the Social Security Administration. After the call Erica Wood, Assistant Director of the ABA Commission on Law and Aging, provided an updated table of WINGS coordinators and Social Security Administration liaisons. The next scheduled conference call with the Social Security Administration is scheduled for February 26, 2016. That conference call will include a presentation concerning the Representative Payee Judicial Training Guide. On February 17, 2016, a conference call of WINGS coordinators was held with the directors of state Protection and Advocacy Agencies. Participants heard from Naomi Karp of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau about potential WINGS involvement in state adaptations of the popular "Managing Someone Else's Money Guide for Fiduciaries." David Slayton, Administrative Director, has been named to an advisory committee to develop Texas-based education materials addressing the subject of managing someone else's money.

COLLECTION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AUDIT

Since the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the Collection Improvement Program – Audit Section has issued reports for 7 Compliance Audits. Of the 7 jurisdictions audited, 4 passed the audit (including one jurisdiction undergoing a follow-up audit), and 3 jurisdictions failed the compliance audit. All three jurisdictions that failed are working within the statutory 180-day grace period to re-establish compliance before further action is taken. Audit staff are currently working on 9 Compliance Audits and 4 Post-implementation Rate Reviews.

SPECIALTY COURTS

Child Protection Courts/Child Support Courts Program

Effective January 1, 2016, the Panhandle Child Protection Courts (CPCs) were reconfigured. The following counties are now served by the newly created High Plains Child Protection Court under Associate Judge Carry Baker – Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe, Floyd, Motley, Oldham, Parmer, and Potter. The Northern Panhandle CPC under Associate Judge Jack Graham serves the following counties – Dallam, Deaf Smith, Gray, Hartley, Hemphill, Lipscomb, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, and Wheeler.

Effective January 1, 2016, Associate Judge Jeremy Fowler, Title IV-D Associate Judge based in Amarillo, began hearing child support cases from the 242nd Judicial Court (Hale). Associate Judge Judy Sundstrom was previously assigned child support matters from the 242nd Judicial Court.

From October 26, 2015, through November 22, 2015, CPC judges, urban district court judges, and rural district court judges, were mandated by the presiding judges of the administrative judicial regions to participate in a time study to develop an accurate case weight for child protection cases.

As of November 1, 2015, the Child Protection Court of the Hill Country under Judge Cheryll Mabry took over the Burnet County cases from Centex Child Protection Court under Judge Van Orden leaving only Bell County to be covered by the Centex Child Protection Court.

Problem Solving Court Coordinator

The Problem-Solving Court Coordinator reviewed and distilled the content in Volumes I and II Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, nearly 200 pages, into a more digestible format. On the basis of this review, a self-assessment was also developed. The self-assessment can be used by courts to assess the degree to which their operations conform to the new national standards. These materials were presented to OCA's Problem-Solving Advisory Committee in November 2015. This committee was formed in October 2015 to provide feedback on the best practice standards work conducted by OCA. The documents were also submitted to the Governor's Criminal Justice Division (CJD) as deliverables for the grant awarded to OCA to fund the Problem-Solving Court Coordinator position and support OCA's work in the area of problem-solving courts statewide. OCA met with CJD staff in February to discuss future collaborative efforts between OCA and its Problem-Solving Advisory Committee and CJD and its Specialty Courts Advisory Council (SCAC) as it relates to best practice standards.

REGULATORY SERVICES

Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC)

On September 1, 2014, the Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) began operation. The JBCC was established by the Texas Legislature, 83rd Regular Session, in [Senate Bill 966](#). The nine member Commission oversees certification, registration, licensing, and regulation of Court Reporters and Court Reporting Firms, Private Professional Guardians, Process Servers, and Licensed Court Interpreters.

JBCC Certifications, Registrations, and Licenses

Profession	Number of Certifications, Registrations, Licenses	Revenue Collected (FY 2015)
Court Reporters	2,332 individuals and 363 firms	\$237,974
Guardians	442 individuals	\$7,442
Process Servers	3,375 individuals	\$76,540
Court Interpreters	473 individuals	\$27,230
TOTAL	6,985 individuals and firms	\$349,186

Recent Meeting of the JBCC and Advisory Boards

On February 5, 2016, the JBCC held its seventh meeting. Since December 2015, there have been three advisory board meetings:

- Process Server Certification Advisory Board Meeting - December 10, 2015
- Guardianship Certification Advisory Board Meeting - December 11, 2015
- Court Reporters Certification Advisory Board Meeting - January 8, 2016

Agendas for all meetings are posted on the JBCC website at <http://www.txcourts.gov/jbcc/meetings-agendas.aspx>.

Compliance Section Complaint Investigation and Resolution

During FY 2016, 28 complaints have been filed with the JBCC. There are currently 54 complaints open for investigation in various stages of the complaint process; 27 court reporter, 14 process server, 10 guardian and 3 court interpreter complaints. At the end of FY 2015, a total of 91 complaints had been filed; 18 guardian, 30 process server, and 43 court reporter complaints.

Development of the new Codes of Ethics and Standards

The JBCC continues to prepare the Codes of Ethics for each profession to submit to the Supreme Court. Development of the Guardianship Code of Ethics and Court Reporter Code of Professional Conduct is in progress while the newly developed Process Server Certification Code of Conduct and the Licensed Court Interpreter Code of Ethics have been sent to the Supreme Court for review and adoption.

Best Practices for Licensed Court Interpreters is currently in development and staff are also drafting updates to the Court Reporter Certification Uniform Format Manual (UFM).

Examinations for the JBCC

The JBCC certification staff administers and proctors the examinations for the Guardianship Certification written examination and the Licensed Court Interpreter (LCI) written and oral examinations. A vendor administers the written and skills examination for the Court Reporters Certification. An examination for process servers is currently being developed.

In October, 14 candidates took the guardianship examination, 8 passed at a 57% pass rate. The JBCC staff administered guardianship written exams in January with 25 examinees, 17 passed; 68% pass rate.

The first Licensed Court Interpreter (LCI) written exams were administered in October and November to a total of 36 candidates. Also in November, 19 candidates sat for the first LCI oral examination administered by the JBCC; 17 Spanish, 1 Portuguese, and 1 for the Mandarin language. There were only 7 persons (37%) passing the Spanish exam who will be licensed. JBCC staff also administered both NCSC written and oral exams in February of this year. Results are pending grading.

Additional Projects for the JBCC

Division staff finalized the renewal of more than 1,300 court reporter certifications for the December 31 renewal deadline.

Notices were sent to all certified guardians, clerks, and DADS to file the required annual reports with the JBCC with the deadline of January 31, 2016. Notices will be sent for non-compliance.

Other notable projects include the development of a Request for Offer (RFO) to replace the current certification licensing database, and work with the certification advisory boards to develop a penalty matrix to create consistency relating to the complaint penalties and sanctions. Staff is also working with the University of Arizona and UTSA to bring a 5-day interpreter training course to UTSA next summer. This course will help prepare the participants to be court interpreters.

GUARDIANSHIP COMPLIANCE REVIEW PILOT PROJECT

Pursuant to the Judicial Council recommendation from the Elders Committee, OCA obtained funding from the legislature to establish a pilot program to improve guardianship compliance. The Office of Court Administration has launched the Guardianship Compliance Project to provide additional resources to

courts handling guardianship cases. The goal of this project is to help courts protect our most vulnerable citizens and their assets.

Through this project, guardianship compliance specialists will be available to:

- Review adult guardianship cases to identify reporting deficiencies by the guardian.
- Audit annual accountings and report findings back to the court.
- Work with courts to develop best practices in managing guardianship cases.

Assistance is available to counties without a statutory probate court that have a significant number of guardianship cases reported at no cost to the county. OCA will also develop an electronic database to monitor guardianship filings of initial inventory and annual accountings. Auditors are working with Hays, Guadalupe, Webb, and Comal Counties on this project.

The Office of Court Administration will report on the performance of the Guardianship Compliance Project in a study to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2017. The report will include at least the following:

- The number of courts involved in the guardianship compliance project.
- The number of guardianship cases reviewed by the guardianship compliance project.
- The number of reviewed guardianship cases found to be out of compliance with statutorily required reporting.
- The number of cases reported to the court for ward well-being or financial exploitation concerns.
- The status of technology developed to monitor guardianship filings

The Guardianship Compliance Project is modeled after the Minnesota's Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP).

- Minnesota operates statewide to audit conservator accounts and provide information and recommendations to the district courts and to conservators.
- The mission of the Conservator Account Auditing Program (CAAP) is to safeguard the assets of protected persons through the oversight of conservators by conducting professional compliance audits.
- Minnesota uses an online conservator account reporting application called MyMNConservator (MMC).

New Guardianship Compliance Personnel

OCA has been authorized three auditor/investigator positions called guardianship compliance specialists.

Kim Bennink, October 19, 2015

- Ms. Bennink comes to the OCA from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice where she was employed as an Auditor III-Field Services. In that position Kim performed audits for case management, eligibility, and grant funded programs statewide. Kim holds a Bachelor's degree in Biology and English from Southwest Texas State University as well as an MBA from the University of Phoenix, and Master Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (MSIS) areas were Public Health Education and Healthcare Administration from Southwest Texas State University.

Rebecca Doolittle, October 21, 2015

- Ms. Doolittle comes to the OCA from the Office of the Attorney General where she was employed as a Child Support Officer IV, Enforcement Officer-Financial Specialist. In that position Rebecca acted as a team leader responsible for financial adjustments, financial inquiries, order entry, payment negotiation, and referring delinquent cases assuring adherence to agency quality control standards. Rebecca is fluent in Spanish and holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

David Paniagua, December 7, 2015

- Mr. Paniagua comes to the OCA from the Texas Lottery Commission. In that position he conducted audits to ensure legal compliance with state statutes and internal regulations. David also worked for the OAG where he conducted audits of Medicaid provider fraud. David is retired from the Texas Comptrollers of Public Accounts where as an internal auditor he conducted independent management and performance audits. David is fluent in Spanish, and holds Bachelor's degree in Accounting and Management from Southwest Texas State University. He is also a Certified Fraud Examiner, Certified Internal Auditor, and holds the Basic Peace Officer Certification.

Guardianship Compliance Training

Training has taken place with Jana Cotton-Compliance Coordinator with Travis County Probate Court where staff met with the court auditor, investigator and attended guardianship hearings.

In November, Guardianship Compliance Project auditor's visited with coordinator Lynn McGinnis, Smith County Court. During the visit they attended contested and uncontested guardianship hearings, met with the clerk and auditor, and reviewed and audited guardianship files.

Probate attorney Don Ford talked to staff from the perspective of the guardianship attorney on inventories and annual accountings.

Amanda Stites and Jeff Rinard attended the NCSC Court Technology Conference and workshop on their Minnesota's database (September 22-24) in Minneapolis.

Guardianship Compliance Participating Counties

In November, Amanda Stites and Jeff Rinard met with Hays County clerk, Judge Glickler and court staff to make arrangements to begin the project in **Hays County**.

- Conduct Initial Assessment and Preliminary Program Survey
- Conduct Programmatic Audit and File Review for overall compliance-Reviewed 500 + cases
- Conduct Financial Audit of estate using Initial Inventory and Annual Accountings
- Recommend Best Practices for the Courts and Clerks
- Received on-line access to Odyssey and starting the auditing process
- Reviewing files for missing inventories and accountings
- Developed notice to send relating to documents
- Auditing files with complete inventories and accountings

Also in November, Jeff Rinard met with Judge Dwyer, Guadalupe County, and court and clerk staff to discuss moving the project to Guadalupe County. Auditors began work with the Clerk and Courts in **Guadalupe County** in January.

- Conduct Initial Assessment and Preliminary Program Survey
- Conduct Programmatic Audit and File Review for overall compliance
- Conduct Financial Audit of estate using Initial Inventory and Annual Accountings
- Recommend Best Practices for the Courts and Clerks
- Developed a survey to send to the counties for info on their guardianship processes and procedures
- Developed a project webpage under OCA services

Conservatorship Accountability Project (CAP)

Texas has received an implementation award to receive technical assistance to implement the Conservatorship Accountability Project (CAP). Indiana, Iowa, and Texas were selected to receive implementation awards; New Mexico and Nevada were provided planning awards. This project will use the extensive expertise and experience of the National Center for State Courts to support Texas' efforts in adapting the Minnesota "MyMNConservator" software, which allows conservators (known as guardians of the estate in Texas) to file their inventory and annual accountings electronically, integrating the software with our statewide electronic filing system. The red flag validation and implementation, standardized reports and alerts, and judicial response protocols in the system will greatly improve Texas judges' ability to protect assets and modernize and improve guardianship accounting with limited resources. This project coincides with the Office of Court Administration's [Guardianship Compliance Pilot Project](#).

TIMOTHY COLE EXONERATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

The [Timothy Cole Exoneration Review Commission](#) first met on October 29, 2015, in the Supreme Court Courtroom. The initial meeting covered an array of background information on the topic of exonerations, as well as the areas the Commission may review and examine. Representative John T. Smithee was selected as the presiding officer of the Commission. An exoneree, Richard Miles, also addressed the Commission to provide an overview of his case. Representative Ruth Jones McClendon and Senator Rodney Ellis, the House author and Senate sponsor of the legislation creating the Commission, each addressed the Commission with their thoughts on how it might proceed. Timothy Cole's family also attended and was acknowledged and a video was shown about Timothy Cole.

The Commission met again on Thursday, December 10 where data on exonerations since 2010 was reviewed. Background information on electronic recording of interrogations was presented, as well as the practices in other states in regards to this topic. The Commission discussed various areas of interest for research and it was decided that staff would distribute a poll to Commission members to identify the top research areas of interest.

This poll was distributed and returned by the Commission members. Staff has begun to move forward on the top area selected for further study, electronic recording of interrogations, in preparation for the next Commission meeting at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 22, 2016.