



**CENTERS OF  
EXCELLENCE**  
A Judicial Branch Initiative

## **Centers of Excellence Nomination Report on the 214<sup>th</sup> District Court in Nueces County, Texas**

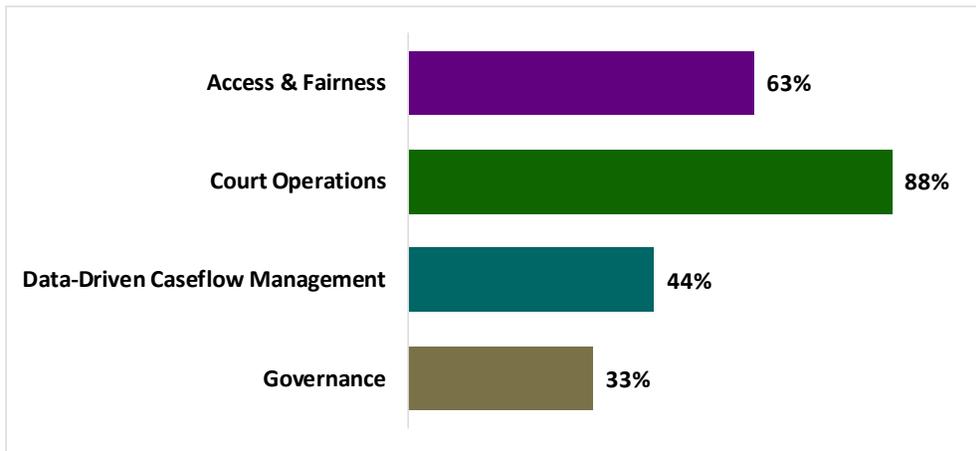
Presiding Judge: Honorable Inna Klein  
Court Manager: Gabriela Dennis  
Court Administrator: Marilee Roberts  
June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Introduction to the 214th District Court**

The 214<sup>th</sup> District Court is one of eight district courts in Nueces County, Texas and is headed by the Honorable Inna Klein. In 2007 she began working as an Assistant District Attorney with Nueces County, and was elected to the bench of the 214<sup>th</sup> District Court in 2017. That same year she was unanimously elected to be the Local Administrative Judge by the Board of District Court Judges. The 214<sup>th</sup> District, along with the 347<sup>th</sup> District court, were among the first candidates to approach the Office of Court Administration about becoming a Judicial Center of Excellence.

**Baseline Performance Measures:**

PERFORMANCE AREA STRENGTH INDEX



In the initial review, the 214<sup>th</sup> District Court had strong marks in **Court Operations**, but was lacking in **Governance**, **Data-Driven Caseflow Management**, and **Access & Fairness**. In **Governance**, the court was missing key written policies related to court administration and was not publishing performance data to its stakeholders. In **Data-driven Caseflow Management**, the court was not properly tracking appearances or trial date certainty. Under **Access and Fairness**, the court needed to improve access to the court by improving community resources on both the court’s website and in its county offices.

**Post COE Performance Measures:**

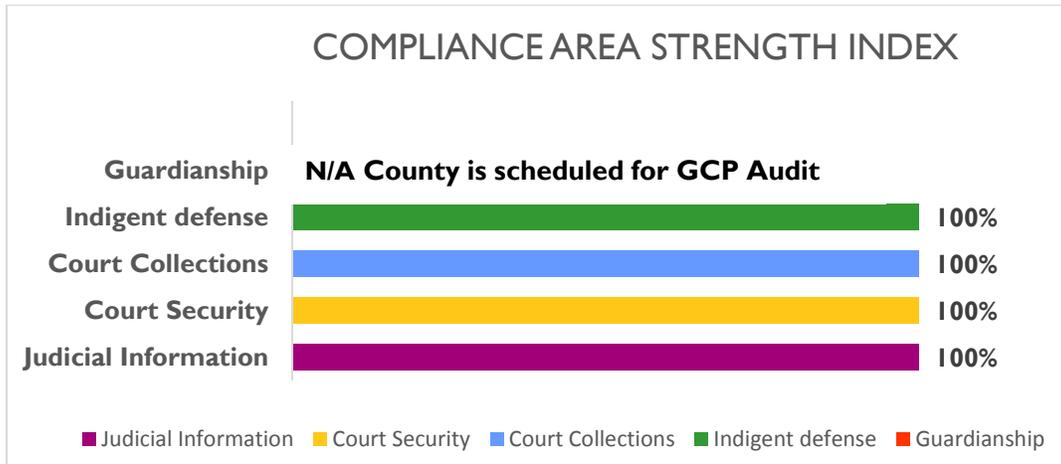
PERFORMANCE AREA STRENGTH INDEX



Following their engagement with OCA, the 214<sup>th</sup> saw substantial improvement in all performance areas. Particularly in the areas of **Governance and Data-Driven Caseflow Management**. To achieve this Judge Klein, Court Manager Gabriela

Dennis, and Court Administrator Marilee Roberts took a step by step approach, beginning with their weakest area, **Governance**, and making small adjustments which lead to more fundamental changes in how the 214<sup>th</sup> administered court business. In **Data-Driven Caseflow Management**, the court engaged more fully in the applying tools already available in their case management system to identify and allocate complex cases appropriately.

### Compliance Areas



Judge Klein and the 214<sup>th</sup> District Court are engaged in their county processes. The 214<sup>th</sup> does not have jurisdiction in guardianship cases. Court Collections are administered through the district clerk’s office which is up to date with all mandated polices. Judge Klein remains engaged with her county on these issues. TIDC has approved the most recent indigent defense plan. Hector Gomez has visited the jurisdiction and they are in the process of making improvements. They are current in all reporting to TIDC and statutory reporting standards with Judicial Information.

### Summary of Findings

The 214<sup>th</sup> District Court is dedicated to judicial administration and excellence. Judge Klein took the bench for the District in 2017 and in that time, she has established a Felony Domestic Violence Court and received grant funding from the Texas Council on Family Violence which she is using to make court improvements around technology and court administration. She works closely with her board of judges, the 347<sup>th</sup> District Court, and community stakeholders to ensure the equitable and fair administration of justice.

This court is committed to transparency and access within its community. There is no greater example of this than the court’s website, wherein a visitor can view dockets, review local rules, lodge complaints, and access a host of resources related to the district court and judicial administration.

The court is committed to promoting and expanding justice. Judge Klein’s Domestic Violence court is the first of its kind in Nueces County. It is dedicated to seeking justice for the victims of domestic violence. The grant funding, she has received has bolstered her ability to hear cases. Using the provided grant funds, Judge Klein has made significant technological improvements, allowing her staff more time to conduct administrative duties and continue to seek improvements in judicial administration.

The Office of Court Administration believes that the 214<sup>th</sup> District Court has satisfied all the standards required to be considered a Judicial Center of Excellence in the State of Texas effective June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



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## **Centers of Excellence Nomination Report on the 347th District Court in Nueces County, Texas**

Presiding Judge: Honorable Missy Medary

Court Manager: Andrew Garcia

Court Administrator: Marilee Roberts

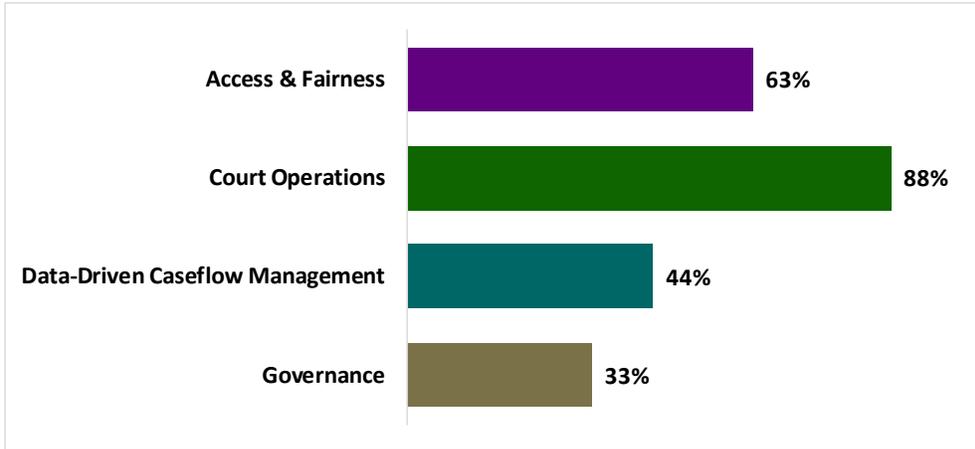
June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Introduction to the 347<sup>th</sup> District Court**

The 347<sup>th</sup> District Court is one of eight district courts in Nueces County Texas and is headed by the Honorable Missy Medary. Judge Medary is the Presiding Judge of the 5<sup>th</sup> Administrative Judicial Region and a noted jurist and former assistant district attorney. Judge Medary takes special focus on children. Outside of the courtroom she served on the Children’s Advocacy Board and the Commission on Children and Youth. The 347<sup>th</sup> District, along with the 214<sup>th</sup> District court, were among the first candidates to approach the Office of Court Administration about becoming a Judicial Center of Excellence.

**Baseline Performance Measures:**

PERFORMANCE AREA STRENGTH INDEX



In the initial review, the 347<sup>th</sup> District Court had strong marks in **Court Operations**, but was weak in **Governance**, **Data-Driven Caseflow Management**, and **Access and Fairness**. In **Governance**, the court lacked knowledge of local rules and missed key policies related to reporting outcomes. In **Data-Driven Caseflow Management**, the court lacked a continuance policy and a written case management plan. Under **Access and Fairness**, the court needed to improve access by surveying court customers and providing more robust information to the community.

**Post COE Performance Measures:**

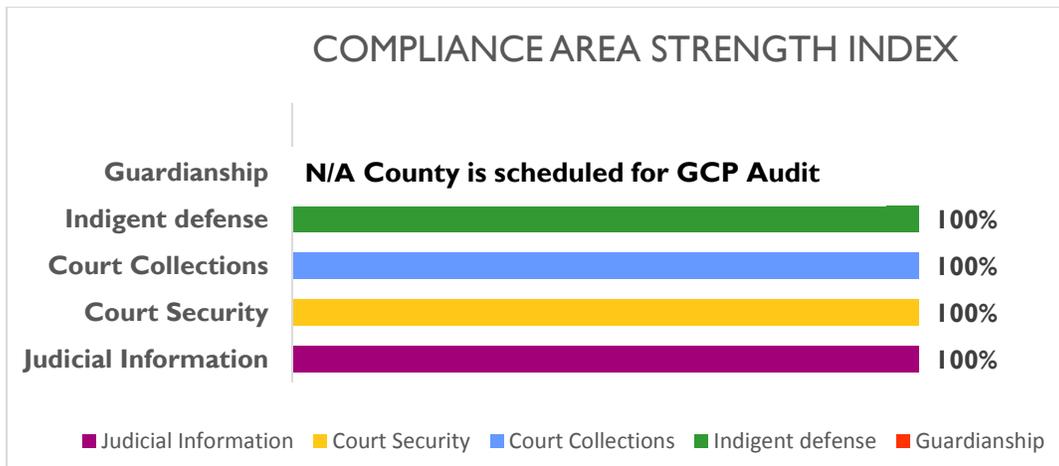
PERFORMANCE AREA STRENGTH INDEX



Following their engagement with OCA, the 347<sup>th</sup> saw substantial improvement in all performance areas. Particularly in the areas of **Governance and Data Driven Caseflow Management**. To achieve this, Judge Medary, her Court Manager Andrew Garcia, and Court Administrator Marilee Roberts took an iterative and step by step approach, reviewing relevant

local rules, evaluating current process, and identifying new best practices in each of the four performance areas. In **Governance**, the court reviewed relevant rules and posted them on their website, whereby increasing community access and awareness of local rules. In **Data-Driven Case Flow** management, the court fully implemented the available tools in their case management system to manage complex cases more effectively.

### Compliance Areas



Judge Medary is an active participant in her county processes. The 347<sup>th</sup> does not have jurisdiction in guardianship cases and court collections and the Collection Improvement Program are administered by the District Clerk for her court. Judge Medary has engaged those county offices and is informed about their processes. Court Collections regularly report to the Collection Improvement Program and are up to date on mandated changes. TIDC has approved the most recent indigent defense plan. Hector Gomez has visited the jurisdiction and they are in the process of making improvements and will be including security requests in the next budget cycle. The 347<sup>th</sup> is current in all statutory reporting standards with Judicial Information.

### Summary of Findings

The 347<sup>th</sup> District Court is dedicated to judicial excellence and innovation around judicial administration—while ensuring fair, transparent, and equal justice. It is the first court in the state to create and sustain a child friendly witness room, wherein children and juvenile witnesses can feel safe in working with court staff, attorneys, and judges to prepare to give testimony in court.

The court is committed to its community and meet court visitors openly and plainly. When selected, jurors are presented a brochure which breaks down each part of the jury admonition into plain language. This ensures that jurors fully understand their role in the process, encouraging deeper understanding of the legal processes involved, and ensuring fairer, more equitable justice.

The court is committed to the full engagement of technology in its pursuit of access and transparency. Using their case management software, the court now posts all relevant and permissible case information on the court’s website. This is an incredibly transparent process that engages their communities, while having the added benefit of freeing up court staff to focus work on complex tasks and further improvements.

The Office of Court Administration believes that the 347<sup>th</sup> District Court has satisfied all the standards required to be considered a Judicial Center of Excellence in the State of Texas effective June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.