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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 1100 users. The division also provides staff to coordinate and facilitate the work of the Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT).

E-FILING

Current E-Filing statistics:

- 860,000 users handling about 47,000 filings each day across all district, county, justice, and appellate courts.
- Mandatory for attorneys in all criminal, civil, family, and probate cases at the district/county level and above. Highly encouraged for all other filers.
- 232 JPs across 55 counties accept eFilings on a permissive basis. Four additional precincts are pending.

TECH REFRESH

The FY24-25 computer refresh project is almost complete with computers delivered to most of the appellate courts and judicial branch agencies. During this refresh, OCA is switching from Windows 10 to Windows 11. Surplus computers are made available to counties for use in their courts as additional machines.

Additionally, the Infrastructure team is performing a proof-of-concept with the selected vendor for the upcoming network refresh. This refresh will replace the current network with one that has additional modern security protections. IT has also worked on getting the equipment for the new Texas Business Court and 15th Court of Appeals.

Court Services

The Court Services Division includes the agency's court security, children's courts, specialty courts oversight, consulting, language access and bail/pretrial programs.

- Participation in the state Criminal Justice Planners Committee with court administrators from the Texas urban counties.
- Assist with the study and analysis of virtual child welfare hearings, in partnership with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).
- Presentation of the PSRS and bail data at the 2024 Texas Association of Pretrial Services Conference in Round Rock.
- Attendance at the 2nd Annual National DEI Summit, sponsored by NCSC, held in Washington, DC.
- Implementation of Court Confidential Policy.
- Numerous presentations at regional Texas Municipal Court Education Center conferences on communication issues within Texas courts.
- Attendance at the 2024 AllRise Conference in Anaheim, California on specialty courts from around the country.
- Attendance at the South Regional Effective Criminal Case Management training in Charleston, South Carolina.
- Co-Presented a webinar entitled, Increasing Court Appearances, with ideas42.
- Assisted with team planning for the implementation of the newly created Business Courts, and more specifically the hiring of OCA Court Reporters.
- Assisted with the development of an RFP for the procurement of remote court reporters.
- Participated in a number of demos of specialty court case management systems.
- Attendance at, and presentation at, the 2024 NACM Annual Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Provide assistance with the NICS grant project for no-consequence audits including assisting team with:
 - Developing an audit procedure;
 - Conducting an audit with a pilot county, including reviewing over 2000 cases;
 - Developing a Final Review report;
 - Developing NICS training for Regional/Area clerks' meetings and conferences.
- Answer MH questions and update manual when needed.
- On-going project - creation of Court Administration Manual.

Problem Solving Courts

The Children's Courts program is comprised of 73 operational courts - 30 child protection courts (CPCs) covering 148 predominantly rural counties and 43 child support courts (CSC) covering 233 predominantly rural counties. The Children's Courts Program Manager staffs the program serving as point-of-contact for the courts coordinating with OCA divisions in servicing court needs.

CHILDREN'S COURTS

The Child Protection Judges and coordinators are preparing for the biyearly Judges and Coordinators Meeting and Coordinators Training Conference being held on October 21 – 22 in Georgetown, Texas which coincides with the Child Welfare Conference. This year the coordinators will join the judges for one of the initial sessions of the Child Welfare Conference, Research-Based Strategies to Strengthen Judicial Practice.

Early Intervention Court Liaison Project (EICL)

The EICLs continue to research and engage with community resources so that families needing services can access them to avoid a formal removal or to achieve family reunification as soon as possible. The EICLs hold regular brown bag events where caseworkers, parents' attorneys, children's ad litem, and other workers in the child welfare system can learn about services available within the community to help better service families involved with the Department of Family and Protective Services. On August 15, 2024, Texas A&M University provided its Final Early Intervention Court Liaison Evaluation Report.

Departures and Arrivals:

Marcus Crosby joined as Children's Court Program Manager. CSC program—Four new Child Support Coordinators were hired in the last period, covering the Harris County, Tom Green County, El Paso County, and Potter County areas. CPC program— Three new Child Protection Coordinators were hired in the last period, covering the McLennan County, Guadalupe County, and Cooke County areas.

SPECIALTY COURTS

Since April 15, 2024, all specialty courts on the registry initially provided by the Office of the Governor were contacted to verify continued operation and current contact information. There are currently 201 courts registered. The registry was updated and published on the website along with a new online registration portal. The website was also updated with resource information, funding opportunities, and visual illustrations of court type totals and locations. A survey was developed to obtain high-level data from specialty courts to determine what metrics they are able to report on and what areas of support the OCA can offer. The survey was deployed to all judges and coordinators listed on the registry on August 26, 2024, with a completion deadline of 30 days. The Program Manager has attended regular meetings with stakeholders, completed observations in six counties, and began consulting with counterparts in other states on the development of state specific best practice standards and an evaluation/accreditation process for court programs to ensure adherence to said standards. Additionally, presentations have been made to the Specialty Courts Advisory Council and the Texas Association of Specialty Courts.

PROJECTS

Centers of Excellence

- The Centers of Excellence Program has one court set for recognition on September 27th, 2024, at the next Texas Judicial Council Meeting, Dallas County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 1, Place 2.
- Courts in the program:
 - District Courts: 11
 - Justice of the Peace: 5
 - Municipal Court: 5
 - County Courts at Law: 4

Protective Order Study

- As part of Senate Bill 48 passed during the 88th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature (2023), the Office of Court Administration (OCA) was charged with evaluating the efficacy of protective orders in Texas. Given the complex nature of resolving interpersonal violence and the social issues that drive the need for protective orders, the answer to that charge of how well protective orders protect depends entirely on where an individual stands in a complex and interrelated civil and, potentially, criminal process.
- During this report period, the final report was published. This report outlined the efforts by Texas courts, clerks, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, legal aid providers, and advocacy groups to promote the effective and consistent enforcement of protective orders in Texas and will outline challenges to the current system and provide recommendations for further policy initiatives and research opportunities.

Court and Clerk Staff Workload Study

- The Office of Court Administration continues to work with the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M to conduct a Court Staff Workload Study of District and County Courts at Law across Texas.
- PPRI has received salary data for court staff and clerks from 180 counties.
- They conducted a survey of approximately 1,200 elected judges, elected clerks, and senior court staff.
 - They received 335 survey responses and have completed 30 interviews of court and clerk staff.
- The final research step is to conduct Delphi-panels with court and clerk staff to test workload models and refine final data.
- The report will be complete by December 1, 2024.

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:

The Division assists courts in facilitating assessments and recommending best practices to enhance their courthouse and residential security environment.

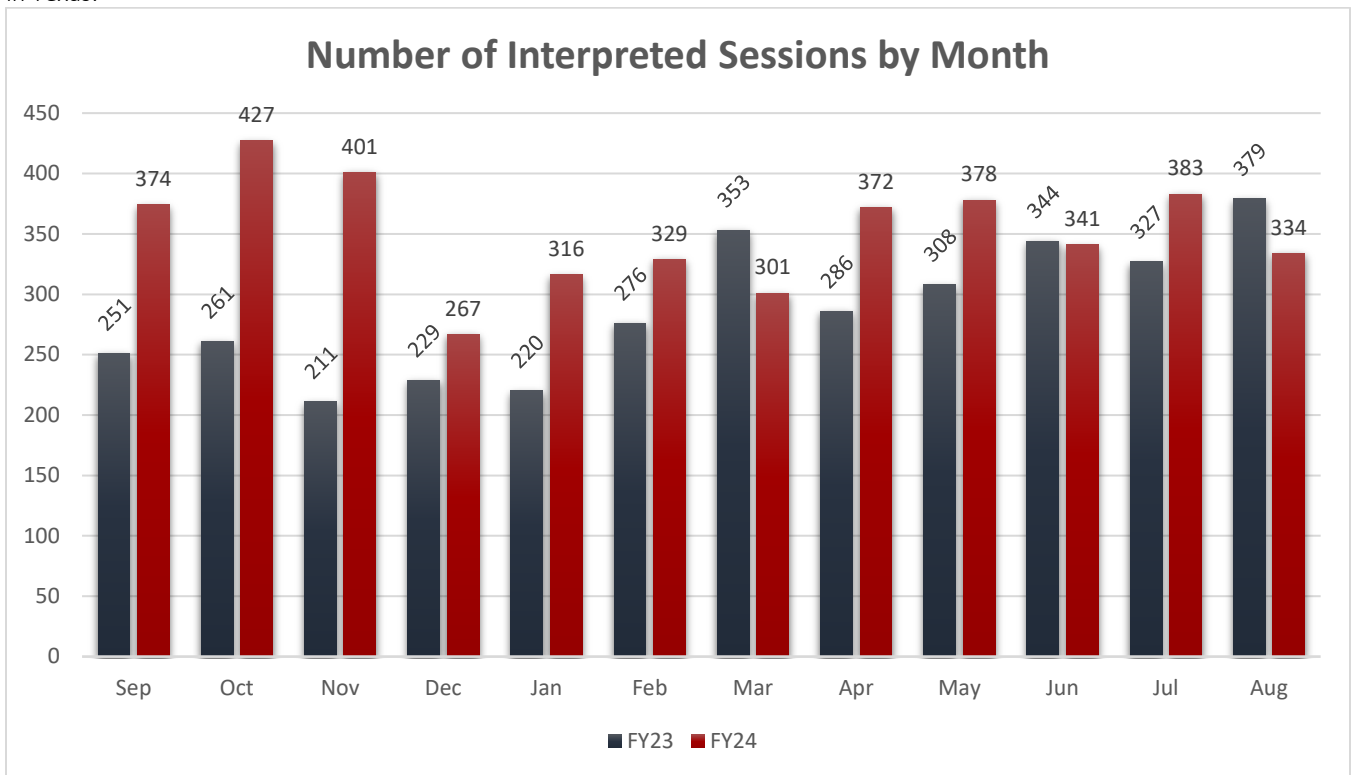
- Conducted 189 courthouse assessments to date addressing urban and rural counties. Adequately addressing the backlog of Pandemic era assessment requests.
- Processed over 1,767 judicial officers' requests to date, to redact personal information from public view.
- Administratively reported judicial threats to DPS for appropriate investigative follow-up.
- Participated in judicial and staff training conferences.
 - Regional Judicial Conferences
 - Staff and court support presentations throughout the State.
- Conducted an 8-hour comprehensive court safety training and presentation on courthouse violence, de-escalation, and pre-attack indicators in Williamson County. Multiple training evolutions are scheduled for FY 25.

- Continued reporting of judicial threats and inappropriate communication via www.iWatchtx.com, a DPS managed, reporting system designed to capture suspicious activities or behaviors indicative of criminal, or terroristic related threats towards the judiciary or courthouses.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

OCA's licensed court interpreters provide interpreting services via telephone and video 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 Program staff also provides translation services as well as training and support for other interpreters contracted to interpret in central magistration proceedings under Operation Lone Star.

From April 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024, Language Access Department staff provided interpreting services in 1,808 hearings in 92 counties. In August 2024, a court interpreter was reclassified as a Court Services Manager to manage the Court Reporter program for the Business Courts. The chart below shows the consistent demand for OCA's Remote Interpreter Services due to the shortage of qualified licensed court interpreters statewide and underscoring the need for more interpreters in Texas.

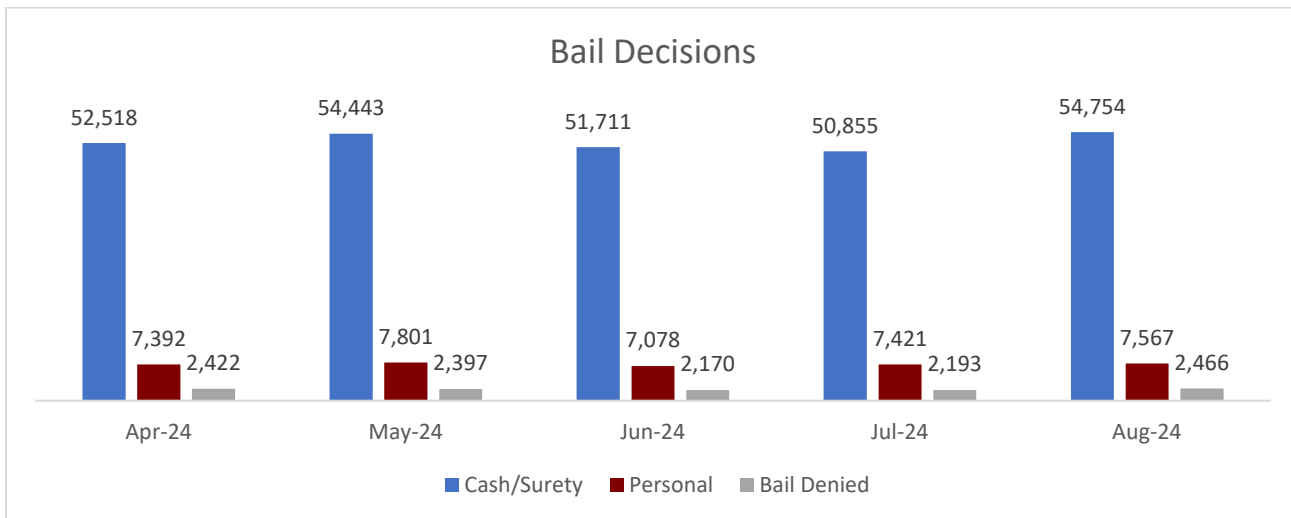


The Court Services Manager for the Language Access Department continues to schedule contract court interpreters from selected vendors for Operation Lone Star central magistration dockets, which are scheduled 7 days a week. Additionally, multiple interpreters in different languages are occasionally needed for the same docket. From April 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024, court interpreters were required for Spanish, French and Portuguese.

PRETRIAL AND BAIL

Pretrial and Bail became part of the Court Services Division in March 2022. OCA was tasked with implementing bail reform as a result of Senate Bill 6 from the 2nd called Special Session of the 87th Legislature.

The [Public Safety Report System](#) has been operational since April 1, 2022. There are currently 7,174 active users and 240 counties that have completed magistrations in the system. From April 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024, a total of 224,001 bail forms were completed. Bail decisions are detailed in the chart below. Multiple offenses may be included on one bail form.



To date, seven updates of the system have been released. Upcoming enhancements include user ad hoc report capability, the ability to identify mandatory releases under Article 17.151, and improved system functionality as requested by users.

The Pretrial and Bail Section continues to provide technical assistance to users through our website, the pretrial inbox at bail@txcourts.gov, Q&A sessions, conference attendance, the PSRS help center, and the vendor’s technical support at support@automon.com.

Pursuant to Section 9, Article 17.071, Bexar, and Harris Counties have submitted charitable bail reports to OCA between March 2024 and May 2024. Texas Organizing Project posted eight bail bonds in Bexar County. Grassroots Leadership posted five bail bonds in Harris County.

Data & Research

collects and maintains information from courts at all levels, analyzes court data, produces reports, and provides data support to various internal and external entities. The Division is also responsible for implementing, providing guidance, and overseeing new reporting requirements.

Reports Produced

- [2023 Annual Statistical Report Detail](#)
- [Appointments and Fees](#)
- [Hate Crimes](#)
- [Performance Measures](#)
- [Statewide Caseload trends](#)
- [Five Courts of Appeals Monthly Reports](#)
- [HB 1182 \(Counties with Population Over 1 Million\) Reports and Dashboards](#)

Data Requests and Analysis

- Hundreds of queries for statistics and other information for internal and external stakeholders.
- Analyses for evaluating and monitoring pandemic-related backlog.
- Twenty-two analyses for new district and county courts at law.

- Data support for various Judicial Council committee meetings.
- Data support for the Judicial Compensation Commission.
- Data support for Court Personnel Workload Study
- Two proposals for transfer of cases among the Courts of Appeals for Supreme Court’s [docket equalization program](#).
- Inquiries related to CPCMS data.
- Inquiries related to PSRS data.

Presentations

- Caseload trends and backlog
- Trial Court Reporting
- NICS Reporting
- New Reporting Requirements – HB 1182, HB 2384, SB 380/HB 3474

- Judicial compensation and turnover
- PSRS & Bail

Meetings and Trainings

- Executive Forum for Criminal Justice Planners
- Clerk Regional Meetings
- Clerk Annual Conference
- Numerous Court Level reporting meetings with counties and CMS vendors
- NCSC NODS Implementation Sites
- Presiding Judges In-Person Meetings
- TDFPS Child & Family Services Review

Other Projects

- Case Level Data
- New Reporting Requirements Implementation
- Protective Order Study
- CPCMS Data Analyses
- Data Governance Plan
- Court Personnel Workload Study

Judicial Directory

- Continuous updates of judges, court staff, and court information
- New courts created by the Legislature

Enterprise Planning & Regulatory Services



JBCC

The Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) provides oversight of the certification, registration, and licensing of 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.

The Texas Legislature established the nine-member Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC) during the 83rd Regular Session. The commission is appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas and has the core responsibility for overseeing the certification, registration, and licensing of approximately **6,868** court reporters and court reporting firms, guardians, guardianship programs, guardianship registrations, process servers, as well as licensed court interpreters. Hon. Sid Harle serves as the Chair of the commission.

- FY2024, the total number of active licenses is 6,868.
 - 2,233 court reporters, 253 court reporting firms, 3,444 process servers, 449 guardians, 35 guardianship programs, and 454 court interpreters.
- FY2024, the licensing team processed 1,302 new certifications and 2,619 renewals.
- FY2024, 341 licensed court interpreter exams administered-188 written and 101 oral exams.
- FY2024, 78 certified guardian examinations administered.
- FY2024, 587 court reporter examinations were administered by vendor- 304 of which were oral exams, and 283 were written exams.
- FY2024, the registration team processed 2,435 background checks, provided 6,518 guardianship trainings and received 7,672 guardianship registrations.
- FY2024, the compliance team received 94 for investigation.
- Commission meetings are held quarterly with the most recent meetings on February 2, 2024, May 3, 2024, and August 2, 2024. Then next meeting will be on November 1, 2024.

EPO PROJECT UPDATE

The Enterprise Planning Office (EPO) within OCA manages agency projects and aims to plan, execute, and deliver projects statewide. Our team collaborates with subject

matter experts and project team members to develop requirements and implement projects. Additionally, the EPO manages the agency contract management process and is currently working on the OCA projects below.

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- **Case Level Data Project**
 - Finalizing contract negotiations
- **Court Notification Project**
 - Kick off held on August 26, 2024
 - Adding counties to the project
- **Uniform Case Management Project**
 - Implementing the four remaining counties
- **New 15th Court of Appeal Creation and Implementation**
 - Construction build-out office space completion on September 1, 2024
- **Assisting with the New Statewide Business Courts Implementation**
 - Initiation on September 1, 2024
- **New 7th Floor Conference Room**
 - Construction started on September 6, 2024
- **Guardian Online Reporting System Development and Implementation**
 - Finalized project charter, statement of work and requirements
- **Continued Enhancement to the Public Safety Report System (PSRS)**
 - On-going system enhancements
- **New Forensic Science Commission Portal-**
 - Adding FSC to the Alis licensing system
- **Moving the JBCC Alis Licensing System to the Cloud Environment.**
 - In progress

Guardianship Abuse, Fraud & Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP)

The GAFEDP provides resources to the courts relating to monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters.

The Guardianship Abuse, Fraud, and Exploitation Deterrence Program (GAFEDP) was implemented by the Office of Court Administration on September 1, 2019, in response to SB 31 & HB 1286 (Zaffirini/Smithee). The

program aims to provide resources for monitoring and compliance of guardianship matters. Auditors review guardianship cases to identify reporting deficiencies by guardians, audit annual accountings, and report any concerns of potential abuse, fraud, or financial exploitation to the courts. The GAFEDP mission is to assist the courts in protecting our most vulnerable citizens and their assets.

Program Highlights of fiscal year 2024

- The Program has completed 247 *Initial Baseline Audits* out of 254 counties throughout Texas.
- Using the *Initial Baseline Audit* data we have identified the most at risk counties to start our follow-up reviews. We have started 3 *follow-up* counties and have scheduled an additional 24 counties for audit.
- The Program has also initiated *County Financial Audits* of annual accountings in Hays County and is in the process of scheduling more counties.
- We continue to hire additional team members to complete the Program mission- 3 new auditors have completed training and have been assigned counties to begin their reviews.
- We also have begun using Tableau and anticipate having more detailed demographic and program information soon.
- Shifting from internal online guardianship reporting system to a vendor-based system-created project charter, statement of work, and requirements. In progress.

GAFEDP Overall Numbers from Jan 30,2019 to August 31, 2024

- Initial Compliance Reviews Conducted in 319 Courts and 247 Counties
- 54,731: Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed
- 21,626: Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 33,105: Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified
 - 21% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 41% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
 - 39% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
 - 28% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
 - 11% Waived Bonds
 - 4,639: Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

GAFEDP FY2024 Totals

- Initial Compliance Reviews Conducted in 13 Courts and 7 Counties
- 6,800: Total Number of Guardianship Cases Reviewed
- 1,970: Total Number of Cases Recommended for Closure
- 4,830: Total Number of Active Guardianships Identified
 - 7% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 12% Percentage of Cases Missing Annual Accountings
 - 11% Percentage of Cases Missing Inventories
 - 16% Percentage of Cases Out of Compliance
 - 2% Waived Bonds
 - 245 Total Number of Deceased Wards Identified

FY 2024 for County Courts and County Courts at Law Compliance Review

- 5 Total Counties Completed
- 10 Total Courts Completed
 - 19% Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 36% Cases Missing Annual Accounts
 - 42% Cases Missing Inventories
 - 28% Cases Out of Compliance
 - 15% Cases with Waived Bonds

FY 2024 for Statutory Probate Courts Compliance Review

- 2 Total Counties Completed
- 3 Total Courts Completed
 - 8% Cases Missing Annual Reports
 - 13% Cases Missing Annual Accounts
 - 6% Cases Missing Inventories
 - 9% Cases Out of Compliance
 - 1% Cases with Waived Bonds

* Statutory Probate Courts reflect higher cases in compliance due to additional court staff

Texas Forensic Science Commission (TFSC)



The TFSC is responsible for accreditation of crime laboratories; designation of forensic disciplines for accreditation or exemption; investigation of allegations of professional negligence and misconduct; implementation of a Code of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Analysts and Management; and the licensing of forensic analysts.

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 held its most recent quarterly meeting on July 26, 2024, and meets again on October 25, 2024, and January 31, 2025. Commissioners will consider 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. The Commission recently released an [investigative report](#) on the subject of Forensic Biology/DNA activity level testimony adopted at the Commission's July 26, 2024, quarterly meeting. During the months of April, May, and June, Commission staff gave presentations at various forensic and criminal justice conferences, including the Texas Division of the International Association for Identification's annual meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas.

To date, the Commission has licensed approximately 1,500 forensic analysts since the inception of its licensing program, January 1, 2019, and currently accredits 60 crime laboratories, including laboratories in and outside of Texas. The Commission recently adopted rules for voluntary licenses in the forensic disciplines crime scene processing, latent print processing, crime scene investigation and crime scene reconstruction. The Commission continues to work with representatives from the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science of the National Institute of Standards and Technology and accredited crime laboratories on implementation of consensus standards in various forensic science disciplines. The Commission maintains a public database of documents related to its activities that can be accessed at www.fsc.texas.gov.

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

CHAIR:

Hon. Nathan L. Hecht, Supreme Court

VICE CHAIR:

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Megan LaVoie