

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Lubbock County Receives Multiple National Awards

Lubbock, TX, June 8, 2009 – Lubbock County was notified today that it has been awarded multiple national awards from the National Association of Counties. The awards are for the West Texas Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases and the Court Accountability through CourTools project.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) awarded the West Texas Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases with its 2009 Best of Category Award in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Category. This was in addition to the 2009 Achievement Award bestowed upon the office. There were only twenty Best of Category Awards conferred nationwide, which are given to recognize the most outstanding model programs submitted to the award competition.

In addition, the NACo awarded the Court Accountability through CourTools project with a 2009 Achievement Award in the Court Administration and Management Category.

Executive Director of NACo Larry E. Naake stated, "NACo is proud to confer these awards and recognize Lubbock County's hard work to promote quality, efficient and responsive management and administration. Your county should be proud of its work."

Precinct 4 Commissioner Patti Jones stated, "It is really exciting to see these programs recognized by others outside of Lubbock County. All of us are proud of the work that has been put into delivering a better service for our citizens through these innovative programs."

Chief Public Defender Jack Stoffregen was ecstatic with the recognition, "Our office is obviously pleased with NACo's acknowledgement. It is both interesting and pleasing that an indigent defense program has won a national award in the best of the best category for criminal justice and public safety."

The West Texas Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases (WTRPD) was established in November 2007 as a collaboration of sixty-five counties in West Texas to provide indigent defense services to individuals charged with the offense of capital murder. The region covers 64,353 square miles with a population of approximately 1,444,015 people. The office was established in response to the counties' desire to have qualified expert defense services available at an affordable cost to the counties. With that in mind, the counties banded together to create a cost-sharing system where all counties could benefit from the services of public defenders, mitigation experts, investigators and legal secretaries at a reduced and consistent cost. The office began accepting clients in January 2008 and has represented fourteen capital murder defendants in eleven counties to date. Because of the arrangement, counties have already saved over

\$300,000, excluding expert and travel expenses. This savings will continue to grow when one or more of the cases proceed to a contested death penalty trial.

Beginning in 2005, the Lubbock County District Courts and County Courts at Law began using the CourTools measures to allow the public to “judge the judges.” That year the Courts implemented seven of the ten measures, followed by nine of the measures in 2006 and all ten measures in 2007. Not only do the measures allow the Courts to be accountable to the citizens, they also have allowed the Courts and others to measure the successfulness of its programs and initiatives. The Courts have taken the CourTools measures to an increased level of transparency by publically releasing the report each year and by establishing strategies for improving deficient areas identified in the report. While not all information in the report is positive, the Courts have experienced increased public respect from citizens and funding bodies simply due to the efforts to be accountable and improve its performance.

A formal awards ceremony will occur at NACo’s 13th Annual Awards Ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 26.

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