



## TEXAS TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE

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### **TASK FORCE ON INDIGENT DEFENSE RELEASES REPORT ON CREATING A PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE IN TEXAS**

AUSTIN – The Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense released a report Wednesday to provide local and state officials with information about public defenders and whether creating one makes sense for their county or region. The *Blueprint for Creating a Public Defender Office in Texas, Second Edition* builds on an earlier publication from 2004. Since then, eight new public defender offices have opened in Texas bringing the total to fifteen. The new offices provide representation in a variety of case types, including misdemeanor trials, capital cases, appeals, and criminal defense for defendants with mental health issues. This *Blueprint* includes information on public defender advantages and disadvantages, how to conduct a feasibility study for establishing an office, steps needed to create a public defender office, and overviews of all 15 public defender offices in Texas.

“The new *Blueprint* incorporates all that we have learned over the last four years in helping create eight new public defender offices in Texas and provides the best possible information to jurisdictions considering them” said Sharon Keller, presiding judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals and Task Force chair.

“Having worked for a number of years in Texas, I became discouraged about the lack of public defender programs in counties around the state,” said Robert Spangenberg, president of The Spangenberg Group. “In my judgment the second edition of the *Blueprint*, developed by Task Force staff, is extremely important in encouraging more counties to consider public defender programs. I find the document to be complete and compelling for counties considering such a system. It is a first rate document!”

“Public defender offices have proven to be an efficient method of providing required representation to poor criminal defendants,” said Jim Allison, general counsel of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, “and the revised *Blueprint* is an excellent resource for other counties considering switching to that system.”

The report is available on the Task Force’s web site,  
<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/oca/tfid/>.

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