

INDIGENT COUNSEL IN THE HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT COURTS


A REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY RESTORING JUSTICE AND THE TEXAS CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY

THIS REPORT USES DATA FROM HARRIS COUNTY'S NEW INDIGENT DEFENSE DASHBOARD TO SHOW HOW FREQUENTLY EACH OF THE DISTRICT COURT JUDGES UTILIZES THE HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE, WHICH IS CAPABLE OF RECEIVING UP TO 20% OF ALL DISTRICT COURT INDIGENT APPOINTMENTS.

DISTRICT COURTS BY LOWEST PUBLIC DEFENDER APPOINTMENT RATE

JANUARY 2023

#1 JUDGE BROCK THOMAS




1.85%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

RIC

#2 JUDGE KRISTIN M. GUINEY




4.30%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

183RD DISTRICT COURT

#3 JUDGE NIKITA V. HARMON



4.74%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

176TH DISTRICT COURT

<u>RANK</u>	<u>COURT</u>	<u>JUDGE</u>	<u>% OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO</u>
4.	179TH	ANA MARTINEZ	6.50%
5.	182ND	DANILO LACAYO	7.85%
6.	339TH	TE'IVA J. BELL	8.41%
7.	209TH	BRIAN E WARREN	9.95%
8.	208TH	BEVERLY D. ARMSTRONG	10.20%
9.	248TH	HILARY UNGER	10.50%
10.	177TH	ROBERT JOHNSON	10.56%
11.	263RD	MELISSA M. MORRIS	10.61%
12.	178TH	KELLI JOHNSON	10.61%
13.	338TH	RAMONA FRANKLIN	11.49%
14.	180TH	DASEAN JONES	12.00%
15.	337TH	COLLEEN GAIDO	12.68%
16.	232ND	JOSH HILL	13.38%
17.	351ST	NATALIA "NATA" CORNELIO	13.54%
18.	262ND	LORI CHAMBERS GRAY	13.61%
19.	228TH	FRANK AGUILAR	13.64%
20.	185TH	ANDREA BEALL	14.36%
21.	184TH	KATHERINE N. THOMAS	15.43%
22.	482ND	VERONICA M. NELSON	17.16%
23.	174TH	HAZEL B. JONES	18.00%
24.	230TH	CHRIS MORTON	20.36%

TOTAL PDO APPOINTMENT RATE

10.87%

The 6th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution requires the appointment of an attorney for anyone facing criminal charges that is unable to afford their own. In Harris County, the judges of the district courts select attorneys for any indigent defendant facing charges in their court.

Despite the establishment of the Harris County Public Defender's Office in 2011, many of Harris County's elected district court judges fail to appoint the Public Defender's Office to capacity, opting to appoint private attorneys to represent indigent defendants instead.

Recent research conducted in Harris County shows that private attorneys receiving appointments are less effective than the Harris County Public Defender's Office in addition to frequently donating to judicial re-election campaigns and exceeding the Texas Indigent Defense Commission's maximum recommended caseload limits.