

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

MARCH 2023

#1 JUDGE BROCK THOMAS




1.21%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

RIC

#2 JUDGE KRISTIN M. GUINEY




4.74%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

183RD DISTRICT COURT

#3 JUDGE LORI CHAMBERS GRAY



6.11%

OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO

262ND DISTRICT COURT

<u>RANK</u>	<u>COURT</u>	<u>JUDGE</u>	<u>% OF INDIGENT CASES ASSIGNED TO PDO</u>
4.	228TH	FRANK AGUILAR	8.28%
5.	176TH	NIKITA V. HARMON	8.33%
6.	180TH	DASEAN JONES	9.05%
7.	351ST	NATALIA "NATA" CORNELIO	9.27%
8.	338TH	RAMONA FRANKLIN	9.50%
9.	177TH	ROBERT JOHNSON	9.63%
10.	178TH	KELLI JOHNSON	9.84%
11.	208TH	BEVERLY D. ARMSTRONG	11.73%
12.	248TH	HILARY UNGER	11.96%
13.	232ND	JOSH HILL	12.32%
14.	263RD	MELISSA M. MORRIS	13.16%
15.	339TH	TE'IVA J. BELL	13.61%
16.	179TH	ANA MARTINEZ	14.21%
17.	184TH	KATHERINE N. THOMAS	14.29%
18.	185TH	ANDREA BEALL	14.46%
19.	209TH	BRIAN E WARREN	15.38%
20.	182ND	DANILO LACAYO	17.68%
21.	337TH	COLLEEN GAIDO	18.09%
22.	230TH	CHRIS MORTON	18.13%
23.	482ND	VERONICA M. NELSON	19.02%
24.	174TH	HAZEL B. JONES	21.94%

TOTAL PDO APPOINTMENT RATE

11.67%

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.