

Texas Association of Specialty Courts

www.tasctx.org



Mission:

The Texas Association of Specialty Court Courts (TASC) builds and strengthens Texas specialty courts through collaboration, advocacy and education.

The TASC Connection

New Specialty Court Ally & Advocacy Award

During the 2019 & 2021 legislative sessions Representative Trent Ashby of House District 57 introduced legislation to provide increased, sustainable funding for specialty courts. Although efforts fell short in 2019, Representative Ashby proved to be an able ally and advocate for the mission of specialty courts and renewed relentless pursuit in 2021 of not only increased funding, but a new funding mechanism rather than underperforming collections of court costs. The result was passage of HB 1256, ultimately entitled the Judge Ruben G. Reyes Act, that was approved unanimously in each legislative chamber and signed into law by the Governor. The Judge Reyes Act dedicates 1% of Mixed Beverage Tax collections solely for Specialty Courts with a fiscal estimate of \$9.9 million for the current fiscal year, although current collections are on pace to exceed that amount.

Prior to the 2022 Annual Conference, the TASC Board of Directors unanimously approved the creation of the Specialty Court Ally and Advocacy Award to recognize an individual, community organization or group showing exceptional support of the mission of specialty courts through advocacy and activism as well as being a true ally in the furtherance and sustainability of Specialty Courts. The Board also unanimously chose to honor Representative Ashby as the first recipient due to his advocacy during the past two years.

Although Representative Ashby was only able to appear remotely to acknowledge the award at the annual conference, shown below is Judge Paul White of Lufkin, Angelina County, presenting the award in person. And in a previously unannounced decision, the award is named after Judge White in recognition of his role as Chair of the TASC Legislative Committee. Every TASC member, though, vicariously shares in this award due to the powerful influence our roles in specialty courts have made across the State that was clearly recognized by the Legislature. Congratulations to all!



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NADCP RISE23 Conference

Houston Convention Center
June 26-29, 2023



<http://www.txspecialtycourts.org/>

Upcoming Conferences

NATIONAL EMERGING DRUG TRENDS CONFERENCE

Friday, October 7 & Saturday,
October 8, 2022

DALLAS, TEXAS

19TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING & SO- CIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE

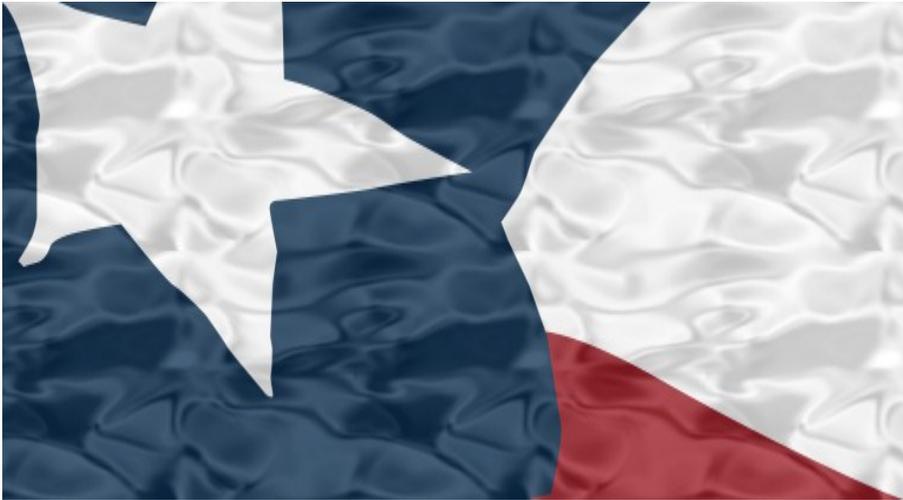
Virtual

September 21-23, 2022

In Memory of Elizabeth Cortright



On behalf of the TASC Board, our thoughts and prayers go to Liz's friends and family. She served on the TASC Board from 2015 through 2022 as Secretary, Region 2 Director, and Vice-President.



Check us out on Facebook!

Get to Know the TASC Board

Elizabeth “Liz” Wiggins newly joined the TASC Board this year as Region 1 Director. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from Saint Leo University and her Juris Doctorate from Texas A&M University School of Law, where she was the Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Real Property Law, Vice President of the Black Law Students Association, and a board member of the Public Interest Law Fellowship. Ms. Wiggins also interned several times at the Collin County District Attorney’s Office and for several judges.



**Liz Wiggins, Staff Attorney
Texas Judicial Commission
on Mental Health**

Following the bar exam, Liz practiced as an Assistant County Attorney at the Williamson County Attorney’s Office, where she became familiar with specialty courts and took lead on the Pretrial Intervention Program (PTIP). She also continued volunteer and leadership roles in local organizations.

In 2017, Liz branched out into private practice where she ran her own firm before joining another established office and becoming a partner there. She joined JCMH in the summer of 2021 and assisted with the roll out of JCMH’s technical assistance to courts across Texas.

Liz has a passion for identifying and addressing the root issues to reduce recidivism, keep communities safe, and to elevate people to become the best versions of themselves. She is also a Facilitator for Policy Research Associates’ Sequential Intercept Model Mapping.

TASC Education & Outreach Committee

With the leadership of Judge Rainey chairing TASC’s new Education and Outreach Committee, board members have been busy presenting at various conferences around the state. One of TASC’s new goals for 2022 has been to focus on education and outreach by providing an introduction to Specialty Courts and TASC as an organization at various conferences throughout the state. Below are several conferences the board has presented at.

Texas Probation Association, Spring 2022

Texas Association of Pre-Trial Services Conference and Training Institute, Spring 2022

Texas Probation Chief’s Leadership Conference, Summer 2022

Split Dockets

Beginning in September, The Harris County STAR Drug Court Program is excited to announce that we will implement Daily Split Dockets by separating DWI clients from the regular high risk, high need clients. This move is in accordance with Best Practices, and will allow DWI clients to focus on their specific needs and assimilate with fellow driving while impaired participants.



Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner presenting Trailblazer Award to Hernandez

Trailblazer Award

Guadalupe "Lupita" Hernandez of the Harris County Veterans Court was recognized for her efforts in founding the Run For Their Lives, an "ultra-marathon honoring lost veterans." According to Hernandez, she began the project in 2019 when she ran her first 200 mile stretch between Houston and San Antonio. "Now this annual event has honored more than 600 veterans who struggle with the battle of mental illness. Run for their Lives is my way of paying it forward to help motivate others."

We want to hear from your treatment courts! Please submit articles, stories, and all other information about your court programs to Kimberly Duran at kimberly.duran@dallascounty.org for our quarterly newsletters.

TASC Annual Retreat

The TASC Board will gather in Denton, Texas at the Denton Embassy Suites, August 22-23, for their annual Board Member Retreat. This time is dedicated for the board to collaborate with OCA and OOG to focus on the association's goals for the upcoming year, including legislative agenda.

STAR Meets Hollywood

The National Association of Drug Court Professionals selected the Harris County STAR Drug Court Program and Houston-based Justice Forward to be featured in a documentary that reflects the Four Pillars of Recovery: health, home, purpose and community. The unique collaboration between criminal justice treatment and rehabilitation, and a non-profit service provider to address ancillary client needs, is a first of its kind in the nation, and something that other drug courts can emulate.

The film crew arrived in Houston in early June to film the quarterly STAR Drug Court graduation and interview several graduates and staff. Later that month, they returned to do special interviews with Keith Liles, STAR Program Manager, and Devon Anderson, CEO of Justice Forward as to how this relationship developed. An extensive, two-day of filming was scheduled to collect actual footage of STAR clients who received JF services. Clients were visited at their jobs, counseling appointments and at school.

The documentary was debuted as part of the closing ceremonies at the annual NADCP Conference in Nashville in late July. Representatives from Probation, STAR and Justice Forward were present.



STAR Manager Keith Liles and Justice Forward CEO Devon Anderson

Resources

Check out NDCI and the Specialty Court Resource Center for tons of information and resources for specialty courts!

<http://www.txspecialtycourts.org/>

<https://www.ndci.org/>



NDCI
NATIONAL DRUG
COURT INSTITUTE

US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Supports Funding for Specialty Courts

In June, STAR produced their first comprehensive graduation for all four dockets since the onset of Covid. Over 200 clients, staff, vendors and family members honored the 11 graduates and celebrated their combined 2,820 hours or 21 years of sobriety, their collective 3,300 hours of treatment, and with these new graduates, STAR proudly recognizes all 766 graduates since the program opened.

Special guest speaker was Houston's own US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee who provided an encouraging message to the graduates. As the first female Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee for Crime, Terrorism,

Homeland Security, and Investigations, she leads the way on criminal justice reform. The Honorable Karen Freeman-Wilson, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals came in from Chicago to present Jackson Lee the NADCP's "Distinguished Service Award."

STAR Alumni Community Service Project

Each STAR graduating class is asked to select a service project that they all can come together and work on for the betterment of their community. The March Class selected to provide upkeep and lawn maintenance to the Olive-wood Cemetery which was founded in 1875 as Houston's oldest African American resting grounds for slaves and later their descendants. Graduates came together in Houston's heat to mow, pull weeds and pick up trash in this often forgotten historic space, and also learned a piece of history about people who helped build the city.



JCMH Resources

Technical Assistance for creating mental health courts:

<http://texasjcmh.gov/technical-assistance/mental-health-courts/>

10-Step Guide to create MHC program in Texas:

<http://texasjcmh.gov/media/czaoppye/mhc-the-10-step-guide.pdf>

SIM workshops being done across Texas to identify community resources (HHSC & JCMH are doing these for free):

<http://texasjcmh.gov/technical-assistance/mapping-workshop/> & <http://texasjcmh.gov/events/workshops/denton-county/>

Registration for the FREE 5th annual summit is now open (Nov 2-4):

<http://texasjcmh.gov/events/summit/2022-jcmh-summit/>