



August 10, 2025

CHAIR:  
Honorable Missy Medary  
Corpus Christi, Presiding Judge,  
5th Administrative  
Judicial Region of Texas

The Honorable Duane Peters  
Brazos County Judge  
Via E-mail: [dpeters@brazoscountytexas.gov](mailto:dpeters@brazoscountytexas.gov)

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:  
Honorable Jimmy Blacklock  
Honorable Brandon Creighton  
Honorable Emily Miskel  
Honorable Joseph "Joe" Moody  
Honorable David J. Schenck  
Honorable John Smithee

RE: FY2026 Statement of Grant Award – MH-26-002

MEMBERS APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR:  
Mr. James D. "Jim" Bethke  
Mr. Alex Bunin  
Mr. Jay Cohen  
Honorable Valerie Covey  
Honorable Richard Evans  
Honorable Missy Medary  
Honorable James R. "J.R."  
Woolley, Jr.

Dear Judge Peters:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:  
Scott Ehlers

I am pleased to inform you that the Texas Indigent Defense Commission has awarded Brazos County a **FY2026 Improvement Grant** in the amount of \$250,325 for the Public Defender Mental Health Division Expansion. Your Statement of Grant Award for fiscal year 2026 is attached. Please sign page 2 of the award statement and return the full executed document to [Grants@tidc.texas.gov](mailto:Grants@tidc.texas.gov) to accept the award and become eligible for payments.

Congratulations to Brazos County on taking the lead in Texas by developing this new indigent defense program. If you have any questions or need clarification of the information contained in this letter or the attached Statement of Grant Award, please contact Edwin Colfax, Director of Grant Funding, at (512) 463-2508 or [ecolfax@tidc.texas.gov](mailto:ecolfax@tidc.texas.gov).

Sincerely,

Missy Medary  
Chair, Texas Indigent Defense Commission  
Presiding Judge, 5th Administrative Judicial Region of Texas

Copy: [kconner@co.brazos.tx.us](mailto:kconner@co.brazos.tx.us)  
[ntwood@brazoscountytexas.gov](mailto:ntwood@brazoscountytexas.gov)



TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION
Statement of Grant Award
FY2026 Improvement Grant

Grant Number: MH-26-002
Grantee: Brazos County
Program: Public Defender Mental Health Division Expansion
Grant Period: 10/1/2025-9/30/2026
Grant Award: \$250,325

The Texas Indigent Defense Commission (herein, the Commission) has awarded the above-referenced grant to Brazos County (herein, the County) for indigent defense services. The authorized official named on the grant application must sign this Statement of Grant Award and return it to the Commission. The grantee will not receive any grant funds until this notice is executed and returned to the Commission. Funding is provided as listed in the categories in the table below:

Table with 2 columns: Category and Amount. Rows include Direct Costs, Personnel (\$182,280), Fringe Benefits (\$78,526), Travel and Training (\$4,850), Equipment (\$19,800), Supplies (\$7,450), Contract Services (\$20,000), Indirect Costs (\$0), Total Approved Budget (\$312,906), Less Cash from Other Sources- County Match (\$62,581), and Total Amount Funded by Commission (\$250,325).

Standard Grant Conditions:

- The authorized official for the grantee accepts the grant award.
The authorized official, financial officer, and program director, referred to below as grant officials, must comply with the terms of the grant as written in the Request for Applications issued in February 2025, including the rules and documents adopted by reference in the Commission’s Grant Rules in Title 1, Part 8, Chapter 173, Texas Administrative Code.
The grant officials understand that a violation of any term of the grant may result in the Commission placing a temporary hold on grant funds, permanently de-obligating all or part of the grant funds, requiring reimbursement for funds already spent, or barring the organization from receiving future grants.
Disbursement of funds is always subject to the availability of funds.
The grant officials agree to follow the grant terms contained in the “Grant Terms and Conditions” contained in Attachment A which includes the final grant application.
Any indigent defense plan documents submitted to the Commission must continue to meet all grant eligibility requirements.
The judges hearing criminal and juvenile matters must amend the Indigent Defense Plan for their respective courts to include the program funded under this award as necessary and submit it to the Commission by November 1, 2024.

The authorized official for this grant program has read the preceding and indicates agreement by signing the Statement of Grant Award included below.

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Signature of Authorized Official

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Name & Title (must print or type)

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Date

## Attachment A

### Terms and Conditions

In addition to the program requirements stated in the Request for Applications (RFA) these specific program requirements apply to this funded program.

1. FY26 marks the first year of a four-year funding plan for this expansion project. The grant covers 80% of the approved budget this year, 60% in the second year, 40% in the third year, and 20% in the fourth year. The County must submit a brief continuing grant application and TIDC Improvement Grant Resolution to be eligible for continued grants in each successive fiscal year of the funding plan.
2. Grant funds are distributed quarterly on a reimbursement basis. The County must submit quarterly grant program expenditure reports to obtain reimbursement of the scheduled percentage of expended funds based on actual expenditures. See the Timeline for Reporting and Fund Distribution at the end of this document for dates.
3. This grant requires quarterly progress reports. TIDC will create an on-line progress report to document the work performed in this program and other information necessary to evaluate the impact of the program. The county will be able to request modifications to the on-line report when the progress report items do not accurately reflect the work performed. See the Timeline for Reporting and Fund Distribution at the end of this document for dates.
4. The County must track public defender employee data necessary and submit the public defender salary section of the annual Indigent Defense Expenditure Report detailing hire dates, separation dates, vacancies, and actual salaries for each position funded under the grant.
5. The County must develop and maintain a Public Defender Oversight Board in accordance with Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 26.045 to oversee the operation of this program. The County must submit a draft policy detailing how the members are selected and the duties and procedures of the board to TIDC for feedback and approval prior to finalization. See TIDC guidance in *A Guide to Public Defender Oversight Boards* at [www.tidc.texas.gov/media/8d8ca08bfc7c34/a-guide-to-public-defender-oversight-boards-jan-2021.pdf](http://www.tidc.texas.gov/media/8d8ca08bfc7c34/a-guide-to-public-defender-oversight-boards-jan-2021.pdf).
6. The Oversight Board must meet at least quarterly. The program's Oversight Board is responsible for recommending to the Commissioners Court the selection of the Chief Public Defender. The Chief Public Defender will be responsible for the implementation of this program and will hire staff sufficient to operate the department. Staffing with attorneys and support personnel must be supported by sufficient caseloads.
7. The County must provide to TIDC the minimum job requirements and a full job description of the staff positions specified under this project for feedback and approval before positions are publicly posted.
8. The County must develop or maintain a written policy that includes caseload standards for the public defender office as required in Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Articles 26.044 and that is consistent with research-based weighted caseload guidelines published by TIDC. The caseload policy must require the Chief Public Defender to review caseloads at least quarterly. The Chief Public Defender must notify TIDC and the program's Oversight Board in writing within 30 days if caseloads exceed the adopted standards. TIDC will review caseloads exceeding TIDC published guidelines and may withhold program funding based on excessive caseloads.
9. A Public Defender Office Case Representation Policies and Procedures Manual must be developed and provided to the Commission with the second quarterly progress report. The Public Defender Office should consider relevant professional standards of representation such as the Texas State Bar Performance Guidelines for Non-Capital Criminal Defense Representation when developing the manual. Any revised versions of the Policies and Procedures Manual must be submitted with regular quarterly progress reports.
10. The program must record attorney and support staff work time in a manner that allows for accurate completion of the Indigent Defense Expenditure Report and Public Defender Addendum. Records must contain sufficient detail to allocate time and salary across categories of offenses (capital, non-capital felony, misdemeanor, juvenile, felony appeals, misdemeanor appeals, and juvenile appeals) and to document the number of cases disposed by attorney for each court.
11. The judges must submit a copy of the public defender plan of operation or proposal approved by the applicable commissioners court as part of each indigent defense plan applicable to cases in which the public defender's office will provide representation, as required by Section 79.036(a)(2), Government Code.
12. Requests to revise the scope, target, or staffing of the project, or substantively alter project activities require advance written approval from TIDC. Budget adjustments consisting of reallocations of funds among or within budget categories in excess of \$10,000 or ten

percent of the original approved budget, whichever is less, are considered budget adjustments and are allowable only with prior approval of the executive director of the Commission.

13. Equipment and other start-up costs included in the first-year start-up budget will not be carried forward into subsequent years of funding.
14. The County must develop a written policy that includes a formal intake process for this program. The policy must include: 1) procedures to refer clients from courts and the private bar; 2) a method to screen and/or assess the defendants who are referred for representation under this program; and 3) a set priority population criteria to determine which clients are to be represented if referrals are greater than caseload capacity. The priority population criteria may include factors of mental health, intellectual or developmental disability, institutionalization history, medical history, personal history of the defendant.
15. The County will provide a written plan on how it will coordinate with, and not duplicate the work of, existing mental health systems. The plan must demonstrate how the County will identify and incorporate available mental health screening, assessment, treatment, and community services available to the defendants served by the grant program. The plan must also address how the positions funded under this grant will fit into the County's methods of operation for the identification of mentally ill arrestees and for providing assessment, treatment and bonding options to these arrestees under Article 16.22 and Article 17.032 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.
16. Contracts with third parties for indigent defense services under this grant must be provided to TIDC and approved prior to execution.
17. Grantees that use grant funds to contract for services must develop and include in the contract provisions to monitor each contract that is for more than \$10,000 per year. These provisions must include specific actions to be taken if the grantee discovers that the contractor's performance does not meet the operational or performance terms of the contract.

#### **FY26 Grant Application and Revisions Follow**

**2026 Brazos County Improvement Grant Application Narrative  
Brazos County Public Defender's Office Mental Health Division  
Mental Health Public Defender Improvement**

**a. Application Form**

Counties Represented: **Brazos**  
Fiscal Year: **2026**  
State Payee Identification Number: **17460004330038**  
Division To Administer Grant: **Brazos County Public Defenders Office**  
Program Title: **Brazos County Public Defender's Office Mental Health Division**  
Requested Grant Amount: **\$329,082.60**  
Authorized Official: **Duane Peters**  
Financial Officer: **Katie Conner**  
Program Director: **Nathan Wood**  
Mailing Address: **200 South Texas Avenue; Suite 126; Bryan, TX 77803**

**b. Introduction (Executive Summary)**

Brazos County has a strong need for specialized mental health services and representation where the criminal justice system intersects with mental illness. With grant funding, BCPDO will launch a Mental Health Division with one dedicated defender and one case worker to represent indigent clients whose criminal charges stem from mental illness. The team will coordinate legal advocacy, treatment linkage, and social-service planning; secure prompt release under mental-health bonds; and support Brazos County's new Mental Health Court. Expected outcomes: fewer jail days, competency exams, and repeat arrests, plus faster, higher-quality case resolutions and measurable court savings. Funding this program captures the proven benefits of Texas mental-health defender models.

**c. Problem Statement**

Brazos County faces a significant challenge in addressing the intersection of mental illness and the criminal justice system. MHMR Authority of Brazos Valley (the local mental health authority) estimates that more than 14,000 individuals in the county live with serious mental illness (SMI). The county's criminal justice system is increasingly overwhelmed by cases involving individuals who require specialized care, treatment, and support. Our current system lacks a dedicated framework for effectively handling these individuals, resulting in costly, inefficient, and often inadequate responses to mental health crises within the justice system.

Data collected from various sources, including the Brazos County Jail, mental health crisis interventions, and law enforcement responses, highlights the extent of the problem. On average, 20.75% of inmates in the county jail are prescribed psychotropic medications, with monthly medication costs totaling \$11,147. Furthermore, between June and August 2024, 76 individuals were identified as having probable mental health disorders, demonstrating the need for more targeted and integrated mental health services. Despite these significant needs, the county continues to rely on traditional, resource-intensive approaches, such as incarceration, rather than proactive diversion or treatment options. The county has recognized these deficiencies by creating a Mental Health Court in 2025.

The social and economic costs of the current system are high. Individuals with mental health disorders often face prolonged incarceration, delayed treatment, and recurring cycles of criminal justice involvement, leading to increased public spending on jail services, medical care, and crisis interventions. Additionally, the lack of a coordinated mental health response exacerbates the challenges of reintegration into society, contributing to higher recidivism rates and increased long-term strain on both the legal and healthcare systems.

Currently, while some efforts are made to connect individuals with mental health resources through crisis intervention and medication management, these efforts are fragmented and insufficient. Without a dedicated mental health division within the Public Defender's Office, there is no formal structure to ensure that individuals with mental health needs are consistently identified, treated, and supported throughout the legal process.

To address these challenges, the proposed activity aims to establish a Mental Health Division within the Public Defender's Office, which will focus on providing comprehensive, coordinated legal representation for individuals with

serious mental illness. This initiative will reduce jail overcrowding, decrease the reliance on emergency psychiatric interventions, and provide more effective, cost-efficient solutions for individuals in the criminal justice system.

#### **d. Objectives**

1. Division launch. Hire one full time attorney and one full time caseworker who are fully dedicated to providing specialized and holistic representation to clients appointed to the BCPDO. This establishes a dedicated framework that is currently missing.
2. Early identification. Coordinate with jail staff, law enforcement, and the local mental health authority to identify arrestees with probable serious mental illness. Work with the indigent defense coordinator and local judges to amend the indigent defense plan to prioritize BCPDO appointment to mental health cases by June 1, 2026.
3. Bond relief & pre-trial diversion. Address overcrowding and incarceration costs by securing mental health bonds or specialty court diversion for eligible clients.
4. Stakeholder training and outreach. Deliver interdisciplinary training on mental health defense, restoration, and trauma-informed advocacy to PDO staff, local judges, and the defense bar by August 31, 2026, in order to build county-wide capacity to handle mental health cases for effectively.
5. Treatment and engagement. Ensure mental health caseload clients attend initial community-based treatment appointment within 14 days of release or case disposition. This will improve continuity of care and lower recidivism.

#### **e. Activities**

1. Division launch. Recruit and hire attorney and caseworker by December 15, 2025. Recruitment rubric will emphasize mental health experience. On-boarding process will include observation and shadowing of established mental health divisions in other Texas counties. The team will provide courtroom coverage for the Brazos County Mental Health Court, Brazos County Specialty Drug Court, and all mental health dockets established by local judges to address cases involving issues of competency, restoration, court-ordered medication, and filed cases involving a serious mental illness component.
2. Early identification. The team will coordinate with the jail medical staff and the local mental health authority to screen incoming arrestees for serious mental illness and route the case to the BCPDO. This screening is already taking place, however, there is no local mechanism in place to quickly route the case to a mental health program or a mental health defender. Rapid assessment and routing will increase diversion eligibility and expedite contact with community-based services.
3. Bond relief & pretrial diversion. Within 72 hours of appointment, the caseworker will draft a safety and treatment plan, and the attorney will file a bond motion. Office staff will track bonds filed, bonds granted, and diversions accepted.
4. Stakeholder training and outreach. Mental health defender will communicate with local judges, private attorneys, MHMR, jail
5. Treatment and engagement. The caseworker will schedule first appointment or visit to appropriate community-based program or service for client and facilitate client's attendance. Client contact and communication will continue with phone calls, emails, text messages, home visits and other means.
6. Caseworker provides secondary support for adult non-mental-health caseload as time and responsibilities allow.

Integrated Holistic Defense. Team staffing and coordination with trial division, investigator, mitigation specialist to provide holistic defense. Where charges are filed and prosecuted, the mental health defender and caseworker will be assisted by a trial division defender and investigator to achieve the best possible outcome for the client.

#### **f. Evaluation**

1. Early Identification. Confirmation that 100% of jail bookings are screened for serious mental illness. Barring conflicts, approximately 90% of SMI-positive cases should be appointed to BCPDO within 48 hrs of indigency determination. Cases involving serious mental illness are flagged in LegalServer case management and the mental health defender is assigned as the responsible attorney. Screening and routing efficiency is reported at weekly meetings and added to the quarterly progress reports. These reports are presented to the Advisory Board and to TIDC.
2. Bond relief and diversion. In the first year of prioritized routing of cases, >60% of eligible MH clients receive MH bond or specialty-court diversion. Average length of pretrial incarceration is decreased by >10%. Pretrial dispositions of cases and bond reductions are already tracked by the BCPDO, and this information is reported to the Advisory Board and to TIDC through quarterly progress reports.
3. Stakeholder Training. 4 hours of CLE and/or continuing education delivered by August 31, 2026. >80% rate content "useful" on exit feedback.
4. Treatment and engagement. >75% of MH clients attend 1st community appointment within 14 days of release/disposition. The caseworker will validate attendance on a case-by-case basis and report to mental health attorney and Chief Public Defender each week at weekly meeting. This will require HIPAA releases by clients and HIPAA-compliant exchanges of information with the LMHA. Missed appointments are flagged in the system and followed up on by caseworker and attorney. Attendance rate is reported in quarterly progress reports submitted to Advisory Board and to TIDC.

**g. Future Funding**

Brazos County recognizes that a dedicated Mental-Health Defense Division is essential to protecting the rights-and improving the clinical outcomes-of justice-involved residents with serious mental illness. TIDC's start-up investment will underwrite Year 1 staffing and launch costs, but the County has already embedded a multi-year match and step-down plan into its FY 26-FY 29 financial forecast.

Beginning in FY 29, the County will assume 100 % of Division costs. The current Capital Improvement Plan allocates shell office space for the PDO in the new County Annex at 101 N. Texas Avenue, Bryan-eliminating future lease expense and allowing the Mental-Health team to expand without additional facilities funding.

Jail-day savings from mental-health bond releases (projected 1,600 bed-days/year) and reduced psychotropic-medication costs will be tracked, providing a recurring fiscal offset that will help finance the County's share once grant funds sunset.

As caseload capacity stabilizes, the PDO will integrate the Mental-Health Division into a broader regional model, offering representation to neighboring counties under interlocal agreements-spreading fixed costs and sustaining specialized staff.

With this structured financial plan, Brazos County ensures that the Mental-Health Division will not only outlive the four-year grant but will become a permanent, fiscally sound component of the County's indigent-defense system.

**h. Budget Narrative and Budget Form**

**Salaries and Fringe Benefits**

<b>Job Title and Narrative</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Fringe</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mental Health Defender	\$ 117,926.00	\$ 45,896.37	\$ 163,822.37

*Narrative/Justification*

A Mental Health Public Defender is being requested to oversee the increase of new appointments on cases with an underlying mental health component. This position will center around the creation of the Mental Health Division of the Public Defender's Office and overseeing an Investigator, Legal Assistant and Case Worker. A minimum of ten years' experience in criminal law and a minimum of five years' experience handling mental health caseloads will be required for hiring this position. The Chief Mental Health Public Defender will provide specialized legal representation to clients with mental health issues who are involved in the criminal justice system by advocating for clients' legal rights and needs, coordinating with mental health professionals, and developing individualized defense strategies. This work will ensure that clients receive appropriate treatment and support throughout the legal process. The salary for this position is based on pay parity with chief prosecuting attorneys in Brazos County at \$117,926.00 with fringe benefits of \$45,896.37. The total budget for this position is \$163,822.37.

<b>Job Title and Narrative</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Fringe</b>	<b>Total</b>
Case Worker	\$ 72,030.00	\$ 34,530.23	\$ 106,560.23

***Narrative/Justification***

The Case Worker determines client eligibility and referrals for a variety of social services and provides short-term case management. This position researches and establishes connections with service providers in the region on behalf of the Public Defender's Office. The Case Worker spends a significant amount of time communicating with various social service agencies and non-profit organizations to connect clients with housing, substance abuse treatment, and mental health treatment, to name a few. This position is critical and essential to providing holistic defense to indigent clients. The salary is currently set at \$72,030.00 with fringe benefits totaling \$34,530.23, for a total of \$106,560.23

***Expense Narrative and Justification***

**Supplies:**

<b>Supplies</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
<b>Copier &amp; Printing Supplies</b>	\$ 1,000.00	This expense will cover the cost of copier and printing supplies. Color printers are required for our office and the cartridge replacements have begun to consume more of the printing supply budget.
<b>Office Supplies</b>	\$ 2,000.00	This expense will cover the cost of office supplies. This includes supplies that facilitate daily operations. These supplies require replacement on a routine basis throughout the fiscal year due to attorney and staff consumption. This expense has been reduced from last year's proposed budget.
<b>Printing</b>	\$ 600.00	This expense will cover the cost of printing business cards and educational materials that promote connectivity with the Public Defender's Office
<b>Subscriptions</b>	\$ 3,500.00	Subscriptions and Publications covers the cost of educational resources for attorneys.
<b>Copier &amp; Printer Maintenance</b>	\$ 350.00	This budget is dedicated to ensuring copiers and printers remain operational.
<b>Total</b>	\$ 7,450.00	

**Travel:**

<b>Travel</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
<b>Conference/Seminars</b>	\$ 5,700.00	This budget will support attorney and staff continuing education.
<b>Travel</b>	\$ 5,000.00	This budget will support attorney and staff continuing education.
<b>Gas</b>	\$ 750.00	This budget will cover the cost of fuel for the department vehicle which is used for transportation to and from (but not limited to) case related investigations, witness meetings, client meetings and expert meetings.
<b>Total</b>	\$ 11,450.00	

**Equipment:**

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
<b>Furniture</b>	\$ 4,400.00	This expense will help cover the cost of office furniture for the new employees.
<b>IT</b>	\$ 13,000.00	This expense will cover the purchase of new equipment. Laptops, monitors, docks, printers, and scanners will be

		included in this purchase. \$1500/laptop set up and \$6,000 for a new printer/scanner/fax machine
<b>Cell Phones</b>	\$ 2,400.00	The budget for cell phones is \$50/phone line for all FTEs for 12 months.
<b>Total</b>	\$ 19,800.00	

**Contracts:**

<b>Contracts</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
<b>Court Costs</b>	\$ 12,000.00	These costs cover fees associated with representation of clients. Including, but not limited to, transcriptions by court reporters and experts used in trial defense.
<b>Computer Contract</b>	\$ -	
<b>Interpreters</b>	\$ 8,000.00	These fees are necessarily incurred due to appointments on cases with non-English speaking clients. Interpreters are essential and facilitate communication during client meetings to explain legal proceedings and options.
<b>Total</b>	\$ 20,000.00	

**Summary:**

Fiscal year 2026 is the first year of the Mental Health Division of the Public Defender's Office. The total cost of this program for Texas Indigent Defense Commission is \$329,082.60.

Personnel Costs		\$270,382.60
FTE's	2.00	
Salary	\$189,956.00	
Fringe Benefits	\$80,426.60	
Travel and Training		\$11,450.00
Equipment		\$19,800.00
Supplies		\$7,450.00
Contract Services		\$20,000.00
Indirect		\$0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$329,082.60</b>
Required County Match		\$0.00
<b>Total less County Match</b>		<b>\$329,082.60</b>

Home

June 18, 2025

To: Edwin Colfax

**Re: 2026 Letter Supplement Including Explanation of Costs and Specifically Anticipated Salaries for FY 2026 Grant Applications**

Mr. Colfax,

Please see the attached letter supplement following our phone call yesterday. This letter supplement provides more specifically anticipated salary costs for FY 2026 as well as some basis for cost explanations for some individual line items you mentioned.

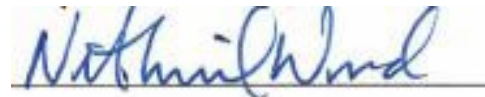
Our requests were submitted in three separate grant applications:

- D20260210820250509 (Continuing Improvement)
- D20260210220250509 (New Improvement)
- D20260211120250509 (Mental Health)

Please consider the information in the attached supplement as an update for all three applications. In addition to the letter update, I have also attached information relevant to pay parity.

Please contact me directly with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan Wood". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Nathan Wood**  
**Brazos County Public Defender's Office**  
Chief Public Defender  
979-361-4581  
ntwood@brazoscountytexas.gov

# SALARIES

## Chief Public Defender

The Chief Public Defender position for the BCPDO is salaried at \$145,649.92. The elected Criminal District Attorney of Brazos County receives a salary of \$186,000 (including an \$18,000 supplement from the county). Currently, the First Assistant District Attorney receives a salary of \$173,250. The First Assistant County Attorney receives a salary of \$155,850. In addition, there are five felony prosecutors earning higher salaries than the Chief Public Defender. The salary also falls short of the salary range for Chief Public Defenders recommended by the 2024 TIDC Salary Study.

The Brazos County Public Defender's Office Oversight Board recommends salary changes as necessary to the Commissioners Court. The Oversight Board has encouraged the BCPDO to seek full pay parity with local prosecutor's offices. A salary for this position that is in parity with local prosecutors' offices and consistent with the TIDC 2024 Public Defense Salary Study would be in the range of \$175,000 to \$184,152.

## Misdemeanor Defender Positions Under the Continuing Improvement Grant

1. One misdemeanor defender with three years of experience receives a salary of \$101,000. This salary is on par with local prosecutor pay. However, the position falls short of 50 percentile mark determined by the 2024 TIDC Salary Study. That study suggests that trial and line defenders should be compensated within a salary range of \$104,322 to \$126,996. **The BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position as high as \$108,575 depending on cost-of-living and/or merit increases.**
2. A second misdemeanor defender with 3 years experience receives a salary of \$98,000. This salary is on par with local prosecutor pay. However, the position falls short of 50 percentile mark determined by the 2024 TIDC Salary Study. That study suggests that trial and line defenders should be compensated within a salary range of \$104,322 to \$126,996. **The BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position as high as \$105,350 depending on cost-of-living and/or merit increases.**
3. The third misdemeanor defender position is filled by an attorney with 40 years of experience. This attorney is board certified in Criminal Law and Criminal Appellate Law. Currently his salary is set at \$113,024. This salary falls far short of pay parity with local prosecutors. The only comparable prosecutor position to compare this position to is the appellate prosecutor in the DA's office with 35 years of experience who receives a salary of \$150,842. It should be noted that, should an appellate defender position be created in the BCPDO for fiscal year 2026, this attorney will be moved into that position. The salary for this attorney should be set comparable to the appellate prosecutor in the DA's office. **The BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position at \$158,995, on par with the only comparable prosecutor in the county and accounting for cost-of-living and/or merit increases.** **\*\*Note:** If this attorney is moved into the anticipated appellate defender position, then the BCPDO anticipates hiring a new misdemeanor defender for this position in the range of \$91,000 to \$95,000.

### Felony Defender Positions Under the Continuing Improvement Grant

1. One existing felony defender currently employed by the BCPDO with 31 years of experience receives a salary of \$133,099.72. Several felony prosecutors in the DA's office with less experience are compensated at higher salaries: \$147,000 (with 26.5 years experience), \$147,000 (with 14.5 years experience), \$147,000 (with 17.5 years experience), with \$141,000 (with 15.5 years experience), and \$147,000 (with 22.5 years experience). The DA's office employs one felony prosecutor with 35 years of experience at a salary of \$150,842. **BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position at \$148,025, on par local prosecutors in the county and accounting for cost-of-living and/or merit increases.**

2. A second felony defender with the BCPDO receives a salary of \$115,000 with 11 years of experience. (The start date for this employee is July 1, 2025.) Some felony prosecutors with comparable experience receive higher salaries: \$136,500 (with 12.5 years experience), \$147,000 (with 14.5 years experience), \$141,750 (with 15.5 years experience). This position's salary falls within the recommended salary range based on the 2024 Salary Study by TIDC, however, it does not demonstrate pay parity with comparable prosecutors within the county. **BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position at \$119,500, on par local prosecutors in the county and accounting for cost-of-living and/or merit increases.**

### Anticipated Salary Costs for Attorney Positions Under New Multi-Year Improvement Grant and Mental Health Defender Program Grant

The BCPDO applied for a new multi-year improvement grant to add juvenile and appellate divisions to this office. Specifically anticipated salary costs for these positions are as follows:

1. Under the mental health defender program grant, the BCPDO anticipates hiring one mental health defender with ten or more years of experience. The comparable attorney position within the DA's office that deals with mental health cases and the mental health court is an attorney with 11 years of experience who receives a salary of 110,250. **The anticipated salary for the Mental Health Defender position is \$110,250 for fiscal year 2026.**

2. The BCPDO already employs the attorney who will fill the appellate defender position. This is an attorney who is board certified in Criminal Law as well as Criminal Appeals, and who has 40 years of experience. The appellate prosecutor in the DA's office is an attorney with 35 years of experience and who receives a salary of \$150,842. The **BCPDO specifically anticipates setting the salary for this position at \$158,995, on par with the only comparable prosecutor in the county and accounting for cost-of-living and/or merit increases.**

3. The BCPDO has requested a position for a Managing Juvenile Defender to supervise all aspects of a new juvenile division. Comparable positions in the DA's office receive salaries of approximately \$147,000. In order to recruit and retain a juvenile chief, provide a salary on par with local prosecutors, and set the salary for this managing position in a range of \$139,110 to 162,000, the BCPDO requests that the salary for this position be set at \$159,995.

4. Although the grant application requests salaries for juvenile defender positions be set at \$126,000, this is really the maximum salary or salary cap for this position. The BCPDO anticipates hiring attorneys with 0 to 5 years experience to fill these positions and to make employment offers that are on par with local juvenile prosecutors. The BCPDO anticipates that the specific salaries will be set within a range of \$91,000 to \$105,000 depending on the experience of the attorney.

#### **Investigator Positions Under Both Continuing and New Grants**

1. The BCPDO currently employs one investigator who receives a salary of \$81,870. Comparable investigators in the DA's office receive salaries of \$93,321 to \$104,734. The requested salary for this position in the BCPDO under the Continuing Multi-Year Improvement grant application is \$93,321. This salary is in approximate pay parity with local prosecutors.
2. The BCPDO requested an additional investigator under the new improvement grant to support juvenile and adult felony cases. The requested salary for this position is also \$89,269. This salary is in approximate pay parity with local prosecutors and within recommended guidelines for TIDC.

#### **Support Staff Positions Under the Continuing Multi-Year Improvement Grant**

1. The requested salary for the Office Administrator position is \$81,565. This position provides direct administrative support to the Chief Public Defender including assistance with budget and grant management and preparation, workflow, procurement through the county's purchasing department and regulations, and providing direct supervision of non-attorney support staff. The requested salary is in parity with equivalent positions in the DA's and CA's offices for positions that provide administrative support directly to the department head: the administrative assistant to the County Attorney receives a salary of \$103,028, and the administrative assistant to the District Attorney receives a salary of \$80,473.
2. The requested salary for our current paralegal position is \$67,192. Comparable (administrative assistant/legal secretary) positions in the DA's office and CA's office receive salaries ranging between \$55,557 to \$69,368. It should be noted that these comparable positions are generally not filled by certified paralegals. The requested salary is in parity with comparable positions in prosecutors' offices in Brazos County. It also reflects the certification of the BCPDO's paralegal.
3. The requested salary for the BCPDO's current caseworker is \$76,950. Comparable positions in local prosecutors' offices would be victim assistance and family violence coordinators. These positions receive salaries in the range of \$56,944 to \$94,392. The requested salary is in parity with these comparable positions. The salary also reflects that our caseworker has more than 30 years of experience as a probation officer in Brazos County and has a tremendous knowledge of that department's practices as they relate to our clients.

## **Requested Support Staff Positions Under the Mental Health Defender and New Multi-Year Improvement Grants**

1. The BCPDO is requesting a new caseworker position be created under the Mental Health Defender grant. Comparable positions in local prosecutors' offices would be victim assistance and family violence coordinators. These positions receive salaries in the range of \$56,944 to \$94,392. This is not an entry-level caseworker position. The position will require recruiting and retaining a caseworker with expertise in mental health services. The anticipated salary for the mental health caseworker is \$72,030. This is in parity with local prosecutors' offices and consistent with TIDC recommendations.

2. The BCPDO is requesting two new legal assistants for the juvenile division and appellate divisions. The appellate legal assistant will split time between appeals and regular misdemeanors and felonies. Comparable (administrative assistant/legal secretary) positions in the DA's office and CA's office receive salaries ranging between \$55,557 to \$69,368. The requested salary for this position is \$58,420, which is in parity with local prosecutors' offices and consistent with TIDC recommendations.

## **BASIS OF COSTS FOR VARIOUS LINE-ITEMS**

1. Travel and Training costs under the continuing improvement grant are anticipated to be the same as for FY 2025. The requested amount in the continuing grant is the same as the budgeted amount for FY 2025. These amounts were sufficient to provide training to 10 FTE's. The department has a county vehicle that was helpful in mitigating travel costs incurred in conjunction with training (i.e., the BCPDO did not have to pay mileage associated with out of town training). It is anticipated that travel costs will increase as we add personnel. Anticipated travel costs under the mental health defender grant should be adjusted to \$2,600 (\$1,300 per employee), and training costs (Conference/Seminars) should be adjusted to \$1,500 (\$750 per employee). Travel costs for the new multi-year improvement grant should be adjusted to \$10,400 (\$1,300 per employee), and training costs should be adjusted to \$6,000 (\$750 per employee). \*\*The BCPDO will use TCDLA public defender stipends to reduce travel and training costs when possible.\*\*

2. The desktop scanners requested in the new multi-year improvement grant are the same scanners used by current BCPDO staff. Quotes for this equipment were obtained through the Brazos County IT Department. The BCPDO is a "paperless" office, and it is necessary for staff to frequently use desktop scanners.

3. The printer/scanner requested under the mental health defender grant (described in the IT line of the equipment section) can be disregarded. The BCPDO has a copy machine for printing, scanning, copying, and faxing. After further consideration, a second copy machine for printing, copying, faxing and scanning purposes is not essential. The IT line item amount under the Equipment section of the mental health defender grant should be amended to request \$7,000 instead of \$13,000.

## Brazos Revised Budget Proposal, MH Div

Mental Health Division

Position	Salary	FICA	Retirement	Insurance	Worker's Comp	Total
Mental Health Defender	\$ 110,250.00	\$ 8,434.13	\$ 18,742.50	\$ 16,692.00	\$ 126.79	\$ 154,245.41
Case Worker	\$ 72,030.00	\$ 5,510.30	\$ 12,245.10	\$ 16,692.00	\$ 82.83	\$ 106,560.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 182,280.00</b>	<b>\$ 13,944.42</b>	<b>\$ 30,987.60</b>	<b>\$ 33,384.00</b>	<b>\$ 209.62</b>	<b>\$ 260,805.64</b>

Operational Expenses		Grant Total	
Supplies	\$ 7,450.00	Salaries	\$ 182,280.00
Equipment	\$ 19,800.00	Fringe	\$ 78,525.64
Contract	\$ 20,000.00	Operational Exp	\$ 52,100.00
Travel	\$ 4,850.00	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 312,905.64</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 52,100.00</b>		

Supplies	Cost	Narrative
Copier & Printing Supplies	\$ 1,000.00	This expense will cover the cost of copier and printing supplies. Color printers are required for our office and the cartridge replacements have begun to consume more of the printing supply budget.
Office Supplies	\$ 2,000.00	This expense will cover the cost of office supplies. This includes supplies that facilitate daily operations. These supplies require replacement on a routine basis throughout the fiscal year due to attorney and staff consumption. This expense has been reduced from last year's proposed budget.
Printing	\$ 600.00	This expense will cover the cost of printing business cards and educational materials that promote connectivity with the Public Defender's Office
Subscriptions	\$ 3,500.00	Subscriptions and Publications covers the cost of educational resources for attorneys.

Copier & Printer Maintenance	\$ 350.00	This budget is dedicated to ensuring copiers and printers remain operational.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 7,450.00</b>	

Travel	Cost	Narrative
Conference/Seminars	\$ 1,500.00	This budget will support attorney and staff continuing education.
Travel	\$ 2,600.00	This budget will support attorney and staff continuing education.
Gas	\$ 750.00	This budget will cover the cost of fuel for the department vehicle which is used for transportation to and from (but not limited to) case related investigations, witness meetings, client meetings and expert meetings.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,850.00</b>	

Equipment	Cost	Narrative
Furniture	\$ 4,400.00	This expense will help cover the cost of office furniture for the new employees.
IT	\$ 13,000.00	This expense will cover the purchase of new equipment. Laptops, monitors, docks, printers, and scanners will be included in this purchase. \$1500/laptop set up and \$6,000 for a new printer/scanner/fax machine
Cell Phones	\$ 2,400.00	The budget for cell phones is \$50/phone line for all FTEs for 12 months.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 19,800.00</b>	

Contracts	Cost	Narrative
Court Costs	\$ 12,000.00	These costs cover fees associated with representation of clients.
Computer Contract	\$ -	
Interpreters	\$ 8,000.00	These fees are necessarily incurred due to appointments on cases with

**Total**      \$ 20,000.00

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**Timeline for Reporting and Fund Distribution**

Reports will be submitted on-line at [tidc.tamu.edu](http://tidc.tamu.edu).

Reporting Period	Type Report Due	Date Report Due	Fund Distribution Date
October 2025 through December 2025	Grant Expenditure Report Progress Report	January 15, 2026	February 2026
January 2026 through March 2026	Grant Expenditure Report Progress Report	April 15, 2026	May 2026
April 2026 through June 2026	Grant Expenditure Report Progress Report	July 15, 2026	August 2026
July 2026 through September 2026	Grant Expenditure Report Progress Report	October 15, 2026	December 2026