

Harris County Office of Managed Assigned Counsel

Job Description: Director

Purpose:

The Harris County Office of Managed Assigned Counsel supports attorneys in treating clients with dignity and respect through high-quality and holistic representation to persons accused of a crime who are unable to afford an attorney.

The Director shall: Lead, administer, and direct the Harris County Office of Managed Assigned Counsel. Ensure high-quality, client-centered legal representation for indigent defendants, initially in misdemeanor matters, with a strategic focus on expanding services to include felony and juvenile cases. Monitor, mentor, and supervise private attorneys handling indigent appointments in Harris County, Texas. Ensure effective stakeholder engagement, policy compliance, innovation, and operational excellence.

Duties, Functions, and Responsibilities

General Responsibilities:

- Responsible for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the Managed Assigned Counsel Program
- Oversee the day-to-day operations of the Managed Assigned Counsel Program, including legal, administrative, fiscal, and strategic functions
- Oversee the program in accordance with the Alternative Plan for the Appointment of Counsel to Indigent Defendants adopted by the Harris County Criminal Court at Law Judges
- Ensure compliance with appointment procedures as set forth by law and the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law Alternative Plan
- Provide oversight of the more than 200 participating defense attorneys, including monitoring professional conduct, evaluating performance, managing workloads, and addressing other relevant issues impacting effective representation
- Ensure the office promptly responds to inquiries and complaints about assigned counsel; investigate complaints when warranted and refer to the appropriate channels as necessary
- Supervise Managed Assigned Counsel Program staff of at least 20 people
- Manage administrative functions of the office, including budgeting, human resources, purchasing, and resource planning

Policy Development and Management:

- Responsible for developing, revising, and enforcing the policies and procedures of the Managed Assigned Counsel Program in accordance with best practices
- Develop policies and procedures relating to the administration of indigent defense in conjunction with the Advisory Board
- Prepare and update a written plan of operation as required by Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 26.047(c)
- Develop and implement processes for assigned attorney evaluation, approval, removal, and renewal on appointment lists
- Meet with the Advisory Board, or a committee established by the Advisory Board, as warranted to address the performance of assigned counsel

- Implement and oversee robust training and mentorship programs for assigned counsel, including Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs
- Research and review legislative updates and legal opinions, adapting existing policies and procedures to address legislative changes

Fiscal and Administrative Responsibilities:

- Develop, monitor and report on the budget of the Managed Assigned Counsel Program
- Review and approve vouchers in a timely manner for the payment of assigned counsel, investigators, and experts
- Prepare and present quarterly operational and monthly financial reports on the expenditures of the indigent defense resources to the Advisory Board

Statistical and Performance Reporting:

- Actively monitor the attorney caseloads and performance of Managed Assigned Counsel to ensure effective and ethical representation
- Maintain legal support and other office resources, including but not limited to:
 - Expert database
 - Witness/officer files
 - Motion and brief banks
 - Legal research files
 - CLE materials
 - Performance measures for the Office of Managed Assigned Counsel
- Prepare and present an annual report on the operation of the office to the Harris County Commissioners, the County Criminal Courts at Law and other relevant entities detailing office accomplishments, metrics, challenges, and recommendations for growth

Leadership and Strategic Responsibilities:

- Provide legal and ethical guidance to assigned counsel and promote the integrity of the attorney-client relationship
- Work closely with the Advisory Board in support of the MAC's mission
- Serve as the liaison between the Managed Assigned Counsel Program, the judiciary, Harris County Commissioners Court, budget officers, and other stakeholders
- Represent the MAC office on relevant committees, at public events, and in meetings with community and governmental stakeholders
- Maintain collaborative and professional relationships with all components of the criminal justice system, including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and indigent defense organizations.
- Lead efforts to expand the Office of Managed Assigned Counsel's jurisdiction to include felony and juvenile indigent defense representation, in coordination with the Harris County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's Indigent Defense Subcommittee and Commissioners Court.

Innovation and Stakeholder Engagement:

- Promote innovation in indigent defense delivery, including the use of technology, case management improvements, and holistic defense models
- Regularly engage with stakeholders including the judiciary, elected officials, commissioners, public defenders, and advocacy groups to assess needs, identify gaps, and improve service delivery

- Lead the strategic planning process to grow the office's impact and scope while remaining adaptable to legislative and community changes
- Stay informed on national and state trends in indigent defense and apply best practices to improve the Managed Assigned Counsel Program

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Experience representing clients in criminal cases, including trials and motions practice
- Managerial, budget and administrative experience (can include running own practice)
- Knowledge and understanding of non-attorney resources, including investigations, forensics, social work, immigration, and other holistic supports
- Ability to navigate stakeholder relationships and developing cross-agency collaborations and system-level partnerships to improve service delivery and outcomes.
- Committed to client-centered, holistic defense representation and, equitable access to justice.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Must have at least ten (10) years of experience as a criminal trial attorney, including state misdemeanor, felony, and/or federal cases
- At least two (2) years managerial experience in a legal setting
- Must have accepted and handled court-appointed criminal cases
- Experience handling indigent defense in a public defender or managed assigned counsel office preferred

Licenses and Certifications Required:

Must be a member in good standing of the State Bar of Texas

Interested candidates should submit a resume, cover letter, and a list of three references to the Chair of the Advisory Board for the Office of Managed Assigned Counsel, Ms. Amrutha Jindal, at ajindal@lsdefense.org with subject line "Harris County MAC Director Application."

Applications due by July 22, 2025.