



Image of Project Row Houses by Peter Molick

During its first decade, the Harris County Public Defender's Office (HCPD) provided better client outcomes than other appointed or hired lawyers. That was documented in a 2013 report by Council of State Governments Justice Center, *Improving Indigent Defense: Evaluation of the Harris County Public Defender* and reaffirmed in 2020 by *Harris County Public Defender: Tenth Year Report* (research support from the Texas Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute). Those outcomes include:

- More HCPD clients who were eligible for prison avoided a criminal record than clients of other appointed or hired lawyers
- Clients of HCPD were more likely to be “no billed” by grand juries or have their cases dismissed, than clients of private appointed counsel
- Lawyers at HCPD went to trial in felonies more frequently than other appointed or hired lawyers and achieved a higher percentage of acquittals than either
- HCPD was much more successful in reversing or reforming cases in the Texas appellate courts than other lawyers
- Dismissal rates for HCPD mental health clients tripled over the last six years

The office provides services unavailable elsewhere:

- All persons arrested may be represented by HCPD at their initial bail hearings
- The American Bar Association awarded HCPD for its attorney-mentor model which was later adopted statewide
- HCPD sponsored more legal seminars than any group in recent years, except the statewide prosecutors' organization
- A brief bank, immigration consultation, trial clothing for defendants in need, and research assistance are provided by HCPD to all appointed lawyers in the county
- Holistic practices are provided by HCPD to prevent collateral consequences and attach clients to services