



Harris County District Courts

Appointed Attorney Candidates

Minimum Requirements

Master List...

You must meet these basic requirements before submitting an application to accept court appointments in Harris County.

- Be licensed and in good standing with the State Bar of Texas
- Have practiced in the area of criminal law for at least two (2) years
- Pass the certification test with a score of at least 75 except attorneys already board certified in criminal law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization are exempt from the local certification test
- Exhibit proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to criminal defendants
- Demonstrate professionalism and reliability when providing representation to criminal defendants
- Average ten (10) hours a year of continuing legal education courses or other training related to criminal law

Graduated List...

In addition to the basics, here are further requirements for specific appointment levels...

First Degree List:

Practiced criminal law for at least five (5) years, tried to verdict at least eight (8) felony jury trials as lead counsel and been accepted as competent to receive first-degree appointments by a majority of the district judges

Second-Degree List:

Practiced criminal law for at least four (4) years and tried to verdict at least four (4) felony jury trials as lead counsel

Third-Degree List:

Tried to verdict at least three (3) felony jury trials as lead counsel

Application Process...

Applications are available in late January-early February of each year on www.justex.net, click on the fair defense act management system link then look under the criminal section. Application deadlines are posted here as well. Submit applications to 1201 Franklin, 7th Floor Houston, TX 77002.

The Certification Exam is scheduled for sometime in late April of each year. Those that pass the exam are notified and scheduled for a video interview. Those that do not pass can retake the exam next year.

After the video interview, names go on the ballot for voting by the judges. The ballot on which your name appears is governed by the requirements of the graduated list. If you meet the second degree requirements, for example, your name appears on the second degree ballot. There is one ballot per graduated list.

A majority vote of "approved" is necessary for an attorney to be included on the master list. Candidates are notified in writing whether or not they made the master list and, if so, at what level. Those that do not make the list are notified in writing and may submit a reassessment application next year. They do not have to retake the exam.

Post-Conviction (Appeals, Writs, etc)

Be board certified in criminal law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization or
Have personally authored and filed at least five (5) criminal appellate briefs or post-conviction writs or may submit a writing sample for approval by a committee of the district judges

Note: The 2nd Judicial Administrative Region coordinates all certifications for capital appointments in Harris County.





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**Once on
the List...**

CLE Reporting...

An attorney's annual reporting period shall run from October 31st to October 30th of each year. On or before October 31st of each year, attorneys must tender a copy of the State Bar of Texas Minimum Continuing Legal Education Annual Verification Report to the Administrative Offices of the District Courts accompanied by an affidavit verifying that the report is true and correct.. If there are errors in or additions to the verification report, the attorney may amend the report by submitting any necessary supporting documentation, affidavits or appendices. Failure to submit this report each year will result in removal from the master list.

Graduated List-Updates...

Attorneys asking the board of judges to reconsider their classification on the graduated lists shall submit a new application. Upon review of the completed application, the board of judges may:

- Upgrade applicant's classification
- Downgrade applicant's classification
- Leave applicant's classification unchanged or
- Remove applicant from the Master List.

Other Divisions Who Utilize Appointed Attorneys...

Juvenile Delinquency Contact the Administrative Offices of the District Courts at 713-755-6575

Juvenile CPS Contact any of the Juvenile Court Coordinators

Family Ad-Litem Contact any of the Family Court Coordinators

Civil Ad-Litem Contact any of the Civil Court Coordinators

Misdemeanor Contact the Office of County Court Management at 713-755-5394

For further information about the criminal appointment process, please visit www.justex.net , click on the Fair Defense Act Management System link then click on the Standards document under the Criminal Section.

Thank you for your service and dedication to the Harris County District Courts!

