



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Harris County Juvenile District Courts: a snapshot of the system, recent trends, and the need for an additional court

February 21, 2025 — The three existing Harris County Juvenile District Courts—established in the 1970s—are dedicated to adjudicating cases involving minors, with an emphasis on rehabilitation and addressing the unique needs of young offenders. These courts handle misdemeanor and felony cases for youths under 17 years old, who are alleged to have engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision. This includes criminal misconduct and juvenile delinquency. In addition to delinquency matters, the juvenile courts handle the majority of cases concerning child protective services and issues of child neglect.

A recent surge in violent juvenile offenses is pushing these courts to their limit, highlighting the immediate need for an additional juvenile district court.

Juvenile murder and capital murder filings have increased by a staggering 261 percent since 2019, with 167 youth currently in detention, 46 of those on murder or capital murder charges according to data provided by the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department. The complex nature of these cases results in long trial delays and extended detention times.

Additionally, juvenile case filings have begun to creep. After a steep decline, the direct result of the COVID19 global pandemic, filings are again up with 3,585 cases in 2023 and 3,793 in 2024. Without additional judicial resources, backlogs are imminent, slowing justice for victims and rehabilitation for young offenders.

Why Harris County Needs an Additional Juvenile Court:

- **Address violent crime:** More judicial capacity is needed to better handle capital murder, aggravated assault, and homicide cases, which require more time, resources and legal proceedings.
- **Manage increasing filings:** Child Protective Services (CPS) and delinquency cases are increasing, necessitating more court availability to avoid delays in hearings and interventions.
- **Faster case resolutions:** An additional court would help clear dockets, reducing pretrial detention for serious offenders and ensuring cases progress efficiently.
- **Expand specialty court services:** A new court would allow more youth to access [specialized dockets](#), including CPS and dual-status programs.

Harris County's Juvenile District Courts have worked hard: preventing pandemic backlogs, reducing detention numbers, and launching new specialty courts for at-risk youth. However, with the rising volume of violent cases and growing CPS filings, an additional juvenile court is essential to maintaining access to justice and enhancing community safety.

"For 50 years, the Harris County Juvenile District Courts have made it work with what we have. The landscape has changed, and we're asking for help. We're asking for resources," said Judge Michelle Moore, Administrative Judge for the Juvenile Courts and Presiding Judge of the 314th Harris County District Court.



District Courts of Harris County

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By investing in this expansion, Harris County and the State of Texas will reaffirm its commitment to providing efficient, accessible, and fair judicial services for all. We urge the Harris County community, Commissioners' Court, and the great State of Texas to prioritize this initiative.

Let's lead with Harris County.

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