



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

Application Process...

Applications are available during the testing period 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 FDAMS@justex.net.

The Certification Exam will be offered at least once a year. The Certification Exam scheduling will be posted on www.justex.net. Those who do not pass can retake the exam when next offered.

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 who do not make the list are notified in writing and may submit a reassessment application when next offered. They do not have to retake the exam.

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

Post-Conviction (non capital cases)

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 the classification

Downgrade the classification

Leave the classification unchanged or

Remove applicant from the master list.

Other Divisions Who Utilize Appointed Attorneys...

Juvenile Delinquency	Refer to the Juvenile Section of the Fair Defense Act Management System page.
Juvenile CPS	Refer to the Juvenile Court page and click on each court for specific information.
Family Ad-Litem	Refer to the Family Court Page and click on each court for specific information.
Civil Ad-Litem	Refer to the Civil Attorney AdLitem Information page.
Misdemeanor	Contact the Administrative Offices—County Courts at Law 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!

