

# The TASC Connection



## TASC 2021 Galveston Conference Highlights



## A Note to our Conference Guests

The TASC Board of Directors and Conference Committee would like to thank all of the attendees of this year's conference for their participation and feedback. The committee reviews all feedback after each conference in an effort to provide an even better experience the following year. Acknowledging this year's obvious challenges, we wanted to put together the best in-person event we could, as we know how many of you count on the networking opportunities that are not possible in a virtual setting. We recognize that the concessions that had to be made to support social distancing and travel restrictions for some of our noteworthy presenters were not ideal, but we are hopeful and optimistic that 2022 will be back to "normal". Thank you all for your patience, comments, and most of all for trusting us with your safety by attending this year. Be assured that the Conference Committee is already hard at work planning for next year's conference in Corpus Christi. If you are interested in serving on the committee, please email Amber Gregory!

## TASC 2021-2022 Board of Directors

*Judge Peter Sakai: President*

*Shay Rustam: President Elect*

*Elizabeth Cortright: Vice President*

*Mary Covington: Treasurer*

*Erin Morgan: Secretary*

*Judge Ernie Glenn: Bexar County*

*Judge Hector Garza: Dallas County*

*Jeannette Kolarik: Harris County*

*Judge Laura Weiser: Region 1*

*Kimberly Duran: Region 2*

*Judge Jeff Addison: Region 3*

*Judge John Board: Region 4*

*Faustino Lopez: Region 5*

*Judge Paul White: Region 6*

*Judge Elizabeth Rainey: Region 7*

*Judge Larry Phillips: At Large #1*

*Major Lori Compton: At Large #2*

An emergency meeting was convened by newly elected TASC President Judge Sakai to address vacancies on the Board of Directors resulting from the resignation of Lesli Fitzpatrick. Ms. Fitzpatrick tendered her resignation of her position of Vice President as well as her Slated position of President Elect on April 14, 2021, via email. Interest was expressed in the vacancy by Shay Rustam, who would then have to vacate the At Large position. Interest has been expressed in the At Large position by Judge Larry Phillips. Motion was made to accept the resignation of Lesli Fitzpatrick as President Elect by Judge Board. A motion was made to accept the resignation of Shay Rustam as At Large Director #1 by Judge Board. Motion to appoint Shay Rustam to the position of President Elect was made by Mary Covington. Motion was made to appoint Judge Larry Phillips to the position of At Large Director #1 by Judge White.

### **Mission:**

*The Texas  
Association of  
Specialty Court  
Courts (TASC)  
builds and  
strengthens Texas  
specialty courts  
through  
collaboration,  
advocacy and  
education.*

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## Legislative Update

The 87th Texas Legislative Regular Session ends on May 31st and your TASC Board and Legislative Committee are pleased to report on four (4) bills that, if enacted, would benefit specialty courts. Two bills provide increased, sustainable funding from a new revenue source. Another bill supports charitable organizations that are often “partners in recovery” with our programs and participants. The fourth bill assists the availability of specialty courts to citizens in rural jurisdictions that need presiding jurists.

The TASC Board invites you to contact your Legislators and voice support for these bills:

- *HB 1256* directs the Comptroller to allocate 1% of revenue collected from Mixed Beverage Taxes for deposit in a Specialty Court Fund solely for our programs, to be awarded through the Governor’s CJD grants. If passed, this bill will provide \$10 million annually in sustainable, designated funding rather than reliance on the current funding mechanism based on criminal court cost collections. Former TASC Presidents Julie Turnbull and Hank Judin, together with our current President, Judge Peter Sakai, effectively testified to the House Appropriations Committee and the bill was not only unanimously reported favorably by the Committee but also unanimously passed by the entire House of Representatives on April 27th. The bill is now awaiting committee assignment in the Senate chamber, most likely the Finance Committee.
- *SB 625* is identical to *HB 1256* and has not been assigned to any committee.
- *HB 669* amends an existing statute, Article 42A.304, CCP, that authorizes Judges to permit offenders to make a donation to “a charitable organization engaged primarily in performing charitable functions in the community” instead of requiring the Defendant to work a specified number of community service hours. This Bill is pending in the House Corrections Committee awaiting a hearing.
- *HB 976* authorizes the appointment of a CCL Judge or Magistrate of a District Court to preside over a multi-county Regional Specialty Court. This bill was passed by the House on April 9th and has been assigned to the Senate Jurisprudence Committee awaiting a hearing date.

Please be a source of valuable information to your Legislators about the merits of specialty courts and how these bills will further our mutual goals of saving lives and reducing recidivism.

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## National Drug Court Month

National Drug Court Month is coming up in May. To assist you with planning your events, NADCP has prepared a field kit with resources offering proven strategies for reaching the right audience in the best ways. Please send us photos of how your court programs celebrate!

You can find NADCP’s toolkit for Drug Court Month below!

<https://www.nadcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NDCM-Toolkit-2021-4-6.pdf>

## 2021 Conference Poster Winners



1<sup>st</sup> Place: Jefferson County  
Family Treatment Drug  
Court



2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Dallas County  
DIVERT Court



3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Midland  
County Drug Court

## TASC New Hall-of-Fame

On April 7, 2021, the TASC Board of Directors voted to establish the Texas Association of Specialty Courts Hall of Fame to honor those involved in Specialty Courts who have provided invaluable and unmatched contributions to the field. The Hall of Fame was announced at this year's conference as was the first inductee, Judge Ruben Reyes. Judge Ruben Reyes passed away on December 12, 2020, following a valiant battle with COVID-19. His loss is mourned nationwide, from Lubbock County where he presided over the Lubbock County Drug Court, to programs across the country that benefitted from his mentorship and guidance. He championed the cause of treatment courts and embodied what it meant to be a true ambassador of a cause. The TASC Board could identify no other more fit to be the inaugural inductee, and we were honored to host members of Judge Reyes's family at the President's Awards Breakfast this year in order to announce the honor. Judge Reyes will be missed, but never forgotten. We will all continue to carry the torch for him.



## 2021 TASC Conference Award Recipients

TASC is proud to announce the following recipients of this year's TASC Conference Awards. Please join us in congratulating the following well-deserved individuals for their hard work in the specialty court field! We will also be recognizing their accomplishment during next year's conference in Corpus Christi.

*Judge John C. Creuzot Award for Judicial Vision and Leadership*

*"For Courage, Vision and Conviction in the Justice System"*



**Judge Peter Sakai**

**Bexar County**

**Family Drug Treatment Court**

*The Joel Bennett Recovery Award:*

*"For Outstanding Commitment to Helping Those in the*

*Recovery Community"*



**RaDonna Clark**

**McLennan County**

**Drug/DWI Court**

*Mary Covington Outstanding Specialty Court Team Member Award:*

*"Demonstrating Passion for the Specialty Court Team, Client and Recovery"*



**Amy Montero**

**Dallas County**

**Felony DWI Court**

*Judge Ruben G. Reyes Outstanding Specialty Court Team Award:*

*"For Effective Teamwork & Utilizing Best Practice Standards to Save Souls"*

**Tarrant County Mental Health Diversion Program**



*The Judge Rusty Ladd Scholarship Award:*

*"For Charity, Courage, Heart and Hope"*

**Candace Ligon**

**Midland County Drug Court**

## 2020 TASC Conference Award Recipients

*Judge John C. Creuzot Award for Judicial Vision and Leadership*

*“For Courage, Vision and Conviction in the Justice System”*

**Judge Robert Anchondo**  
**El Paso County DWI Court**



*The Joel Bennett Recovery Award:*

*“For Outstanding Commitment to Helping Those in the Recovery Community”*

**Javier Rene Soto**  
**Williamson County Drug DWI Court**



*Mary Covington Outstanding Specialty Court Team Member Award:*

*“Demonstrating Passion for the Specialty Court Team, Client and Recovery”*

**Sylvia Araiza**  
**Dallas County DIVERT Court**

*Judge Ruben G. Reyes Outstanding Specialty Court Team Award:*

*“For Effective Teamwork & Utilizing Best Practice Standards to Save Souls”*

**Bexar County Felony Drug Court**



*The Judge Rusty Ladd Scholarship Award:*

*“For Charity, Courage, Heart and Hope”*

**Brad Clark**  
**Tarrant County Mental Health Diversion Program**

**Texas Association of Specialty Courts**  
*Attention: Amber Gregory*  
*George J. Beto Criminal Justice Center*  
*Sam Houston State University*  
*Huntsville, Texas 77341-2296*

**Email:** [agregory@shsu.edu](mailto:agregory@shsu.edu)  
**Phone:** (936)294-3916



## Bexar County Early Childhood Court Media Coverage

Great News from Bexar County getting Fox News coverage of their Early Childhood Court Graduation Ceremony. See link below for the story!

“Although the ceremony was entirely by zoom, it was powerful and impactful by the emotions and words brought out by all speakers. Although we live in tough times and a world full of fear and anxiety, never forget the impact that you make on the people and children that you touch every day. I am full of immense pride and profound gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the best staff focused on the most vulnerable. May God Bless all of you and Keep you Safe and Secure.” Judge Peter Sakai.

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews4sanantonio.com%2Fnews%2Flocal%2Fmade-a-commitment-parents-overcoming-troubled-pasts-reunited-with-their-children&data=04%7C01%7CKimberly.Duran%40dallascounty.org%7Cf548424d3f8648f562e508d90c211cdb%7C51adcfad72f1479cb28f52412e04014b%7C0%7C0%7C637554158627764499%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoIjMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IkhhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&msdata=bC8M78hLyQH0%2FhLtczR5gtCwJ5I%2BXoY5dm43xozC3ss%3D&reserved=0>

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