



SIXTH ADMINISTRATIVE JUDICIAL REGION

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT  
BECKY HENDERSON

STEPHEN B. ABLES, Presiding Judge  
KERR COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
KERRVILLE, TEXAS 78028

(830) 792-2290  
FAX (830) 792-2294

TO: ATTORNEYS

FROM : JUDGE STEPHEN B. ABLES, PRESIDING JUDGE

DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2014

RE: STANDARDS FOR THE QUALIFICATION OF ATTORNEYS TO BE APPOINTED TO REPRESENT  
INDIGENT DEFENDANTS IN CAPITAL CASES IN WHICH THE DEATH PENALTY IS SOUGHT  
PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 26.052(d) OF THE TEXAS CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

ATTACHED ARE THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE APPLICATIONS.

THE "**INCLUDED**" APPLICATION IS FOR ATTORNEYS WHO ARE NOT ON THE LIST AND WANT TO BE **ADDED** TO THE APPOINTMENT LIST.

THE "**MAINTAINED**" APPLICATION IS FOR ATTORNEYS WHO ARE ALREADY ON THE LIST AND EVERY 2 YEARS THEY HAVE TO COMPLETE THE **MAINTAINED** APPLICATION TO BE LEFT ON THE LIST.

PLEASE MAIL YOUR APPLICATION TO JUDGE ABLES AS INSTRUCTED; ANY QUESTIONS YOU CAN CONTACT JUDGE ABLES COURT COORDINATOR, BECKY HENDERSON AT (830) 792-2291 OR EMAIL HER AT [beckyh@co.kerr.tx.us](mailto:beckyh@co.kerr.tx.us). PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION SO I CAN KEEP ON FILE.

THANK YOU.

*Martha A. Banales*

OFFICE MANAGER  
COUNCIL OF JUDGES ADM.  
500 E. SAN ANTONIO #101  
EL PASO, TX 79901  
(915) 546-2143  
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# SIXTH ADMINISTRATIVE JUDICIAL REGION

## 2011 PLAN

### Standards for the Qualification of Attorneys to be Appointed to Represent Indigent Defendants in Capital Cases in Which the Death Penalty is Sought Pursuant to Art. 26.052(d) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure

#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Local Selection Committee of the Sixth Administrative Judicial Region hereby establishes standards for qualification of attorneys eligible for appointment in capital felony cases in which the death penalty is sought in Courts situated within the Sixth Administrative Judicial Region. These standards address the qualifications required for appointment as Lead Counsel at trial, Second Chair at trial, and Appellate counsel.

The Local Selection Committee will maintain a "Capital Felony List" naming those persons who have been determined to be eligible for appointment under the standards set forth herein. The Capital Felony List will be comprised of three (3) sections designated as follows:

1. Lead Counsel
2. Second Chair Counsel
3. Appellate Counsel

Any attorney whose name appears on the approved list for Lead Counsel is deemed to be included on the approved list for Second Chair Counsel.

In order to promote quality representation and to expand and maintain a pool of qualified attorneys, nothing in this plan shall be construed to preclude the appointment of additional compensated or *pro bono* counsel who may, under the supervision of first and second chair, serve as trial counsel in any death penalty case. Attorneys applying to a court to serve in such a capacity are exempt from complying with the qualification requirements of this plan.

## APPLICATION

An attorney may apply at any time for inclusion on a list.

## REAPPLICATION

In December of each year, the attorney must present proof in a form acceptable to the committee that the attorney remains qualified for inclusion on a list. The attorney will certify compliance, and continued qualification under the applicable standards, by completing a renewal application in the form set forth on Exhibit B attached hereto. Failure to re-apply and remain qualified shall result in deletion from the list.

## STANDARDS

The standards for inclusion on the list for appointment are as follows:

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEAD COUNSEL:**

For inclusion on the Lead Counsel list, an Attorney shall:

- (A) be a member of the State Bar of Texas;
- (B) exhibit proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to defendants in death penalty cases;
- (C) have trial experience in:
  - (i) the use of and challenge to mental health or forensic expert witnesses; and
  - (ii) investigating and presenting mitigating evidence at the penalty phase of a death penalty trial;
- (D) have successfully completed at least 30 hours of continuing education courses or other training relating to



criminal defense and defense in death penalty cases during the preceding 3 year period. No less than 20 of said hours shall specifically relate to the defense of death penalty cases in Texas;

- (E) have practiced in the area of criminal law for at least five (5) years, and during that time demonstrated that he or she has the required legal knowledge and skill necessary to provide representation in capital felonies and will apply that knowledge and skill with appropriate thoroughness and preparation;
- (F) have tried to verdict as lead counsel a significant number of felony trials, including homicide trials and other trials for offenses punishable as first or second degree felonies or capital felonies and at least one of which was a homicide case;
- (G) have tried to verdict one death penalty case as first or second chair defense counsel; and
- (H) have not been found by a federal or state court to have rendered ineffective assistance of counsel during the trial or appeal of any capital case unless the Local Selection Committee determines by a majority vote that the conduct underlying the finding of ineffective assistance no longer accurately reflects the applicant's ability to provide effective representation. In addition to the requirements listed herein, the applicant shall furnish to the committee letters from three Texas District Court or Appellate Judges attesting to the applicant's demonstrated ability to effectively represent clients.

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR SECOND CHAIR COUNSEL:**

For inclusion on the Second Chair List, an attorney shall:

- (A) be a member of the State Bar of Texas;

- (B) exhibit proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to defendants in death penalty cases;
- (C) have successfully completed at least 30 hours of continuing education courses or other training relating to criminal defense and defense in death penalty cases during the preceding 3 year period. No less than 10 of said hours shall specifically relate to the defense of death penalty cases in Texas.
- (D) have practiced in the area of criminal law for at least five (5) years, and during that time demonstrated that he or she has the required legal knowledge and skill necessary to provide representation in capital felonies and will apply that knowledge and skill with appropriate thoroughness and preparation;
- (E) have tried to verdict as lead counsel or as second chair counsel a significant number of felony trials;

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPELLATE COUNSEL:**

For inclusion on the Appellate Counsel List, the attorney shall:

- (A) be a member of the State Bar of Texas;
- (B) exhibit proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to defendants in death penalty cases;
- (C) have trial or appellate experience in:
  - (i) the use of and challenges to mental health or forensic expert witnesses; and
  - (ii) the use of mitigating evidence at the penalty phase of a death penalty trial;

- (D) have successfully completed at least 30 hours of continuing legal education courses or other training relating to criminal defense and appeals in death penalty cases during the preceding 3 year period. No less than 20 of said hours shall specifically relate to appeals of criminal cases in Texas;
- (E) have practiced in the area of criminal law for at least five (5) years, and during that time demonstrated that he or she has the required legal knowledge and skill necessary to provide appellate representation in capital felonies and will apply that knowledge and skill with appropriate thoroughness and preparation;
- (F) have authored a significant number of appellate briefs, including appellate briefs for homicide cases and other cases involving an offense punishable as a capital felony or a felony of the first degree or an offense described by Section 3g(a)(1), Article 42.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; and
- (G) have not been found by a federal or state court to have rendered ineffective assistance of counsel during the trial or appeal of any capital case unless the Local Selection Committee determines by a majority vote that the conduct underlying the finding of ineffective assistance no longer accurately reflects the applicant's ability to provide effective representation. In addition to the requirements listed herein, the applicant shall furnish to the committee letters from three Texas District Court or Appellate Judges attesting to the applicant's demonstrated ability to effectively represent clients.

#### **ACTION BY COMMITTEE**

- (a) The Local Selection Committee shall evaluate the new applicants for the list as well as those have applied for retention on the list. The committee will approve for



addition or retention on each list, by majority vote, those attorneys:

- (1) who meet the objective qualifications for the applicable list;
  - (2) whom the committee considers to be actually competent to adequately handle cases associated with the applicable lists; and
  - (3) whom the committee believes exhibit proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to defendants in capital cases.
- (b) An attorney may be removed from a list by a majority vote of the Local Selection Committee if it determines that the attorney no longer meets the objective qualifications for that list or is not fully competent to adequately handle the category of cases associated with that list or no longer exhibits proficiency and commitment to providing quality representation to defendants or that the attorney has not complied with continuing education requirements of applicable law.
- (c) Applications by attorneys for inclusion on the list as provided by Art. 26.052(d) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure should be submitted in writing to:

Stephen B. Ables, Presiding Judge  
Sixth Administrative Judicial Region  
700 Main Street  
Kerrville, Texas 78028

**(e) Until December 31, 2012 the committee may waive compliance with the specific hours of continuing education required for inclusion on any list. Thereafter, to be included or retained on any list requires strict compliance with the continuing education requirements.**

Applications will be on a form as set forth on Exhibit A attached hereto. Additional application forms or reapplication forms may be obtained by contacting Becky Henderson, Administrative Assistant to Judge Stephen B. Ables at 830-792-2290 or by visiting the website of the Sixth Administrative Judicial Region. Incomplete applications will not be considered. The attorney may attach any supporting documentation deemed necessary.

Committee members are as follows:

1. Stephen B. Ables, Presiding Judge of the Sixth Administrative Judicial Region.
2. Patrick Garcia, Judge of the 384<sup>th</sup> District Court.
3. N. Keith Williams, Judge of the 216<sup>th</sup> District Court.
4. Harold Danford, Attorney at Law.
5. Adolpho Quijano, Attorney at Law.

These Standards adopted by the Local Selection Committee of the Sixth Administrative Judicial Region this 21<sup>st</sup> day of November, 2011.



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Stephen B. Ables, Presiding Judge  
Sixth Administrative Judicial Region



APPLICATION TO BE INCLUDED ON THE LIST OF ATTORNEYS  
QUALIFIED FOR APPOINTMENT IN CAPITAL CASES IN WHICH THE  
DEATH PENALTY IS SOUGHT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, State Bar Card Number  
\_\_\_\_\_, request that the Local  
Selection Committee include my name on the list of attorneys qualified for  
appointment in death penalty cases.

I am applying for the following list or lists:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Lead Counsel  
\_\_\_\_\_ Second Chair Counsel (If approved for Lead Counsel, attorney  
will automatically be qualified as Second Chair Counsel)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Appellate Counsel

In compliance with the provisions of Article 26.052, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, I swear or affirm that I have read and understand the requirements for inclusion on the list or lists selected above, and that I meet all of the standards promulgated by the Local Selection Committee for inclusion on that list. **A copy of my Annual Verification Report from the State Bar of Texas-Minimum Continuing Legal Education Department for the last three years is attached.**

REFERENCES

The following persons may attest to my competence in the area of criminal defense (list no less than 4 persons with name, address and telephone number, including at least 2 judges who have presided over a felony jury trial in which you represented the defendant at trial or on appeal, and at least 2 defense attorneys who are familiar with your legal skills):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Affiant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mailing Address**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City/State/Zip**

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Office Telephone Number**

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Facsimile Number**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Email Address**

**SWORN TO** and subscribed to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Notary Public in and for the State of Texas**

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE**

**TO APPLICANT:**

For this application to be complete, you must include:

1. A copy of your Annual Verification Report from the State Bar of Texas-Minimum Continuing Legal Education Department for the last three years;

2. Your resume or professional vita, or a letter setting forth the details of your education, training and experience; and
3. If you have ever been found by a federal or state court to have rendered ineffective assistance of counsel during the trial or appeal of any capital case:

(a) letters from no less than three District or Appellate Judges before whom you practice attesting to your competency in representation of persons charged with serious felony offenses; and

(b) such other information as may be requested by the committee after initial review of your completed application.



**APPLICATION TO BE MAINTAINED ON THE LIST OF ATTORNEYS  
QUALIFIED FOR APPOINTMENT IN CAPITAL CASES IN WHICH THE  
DEATH PENALTY IS SOUGHT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, State Bar Card Number \_\_\_\_\_, request that the Local Selection Committee maintain my name on the list of attorneys qualified for appointment in death penalty cases.

I am currently approved on the following list:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Lead Counsel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Second Chair Counsel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Appellate Counsel

In compliance with the provisions of Article 26.052, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, I swear or affirm that I have read and understand the requirements for inclusion on the list or lists selected above, and that I meet all of the standards promulgated by the Local Selection Committee for inclusion on that list.

**A copy of my Annual Verification Report from the State Bar of Texas- Minimum Continuing Legal Education Department for the past three years is attached.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Affiant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Telephone Number

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Facsimile Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

**SWORN TO** and subscribed to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE**

**TO APPLICANT:**

For this application to be complete, you must include a copy of your Annual Verification Report from the State Bar of Texas-Minimum Continuing Legal Education Department for the past three years. In its discretion the committee may require additional information regarding CLE, including detailed course description or information.