

Applying to the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel in San Antonio

If you are an attorney licensed to practice in the United States District Court, Western District of Texas, have an office address in the counties served within the San Antonio Division, and are interested in receiving federal court appointments, here are a few steps to guide you through the procedure on how to apply for the federal Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel, as well as a description of the resources available to help you.

1. Complete a 2-page application available at the U.S. Clerk's website at <http://www.txwd.uscourts.gov/>. Click on the section at the top of the home page titled "CJA Panel," and look for the Criminal Voluntary Plan, Questionnaire and Application for the San Antonio Division located at the bottom. You should review the new CJA Plan, implemented on October 31, 2007, before completing the application; the plan thoroughly explains the CJA system, the mentoring program, and describes each category available for application.
2. Once you have completed the application, submit it to the CJA Panel Classification Committee, at 727 E. Durango Boulevard, Suite B-207, San Antonio, Texas 78206. The committee meets approximately every three months to review any pending applications, or reconsider prior applications. Shortly after the committee meets, you will be notified by mail of your placement, when your term expires (most terms last 3 years), and the continuing legal education requirements. Even if you don't qualify for the CJA Panel, you may be placed in a mentoring program, which will team you with veteran federal lawyers to allow you to gain valuable federal experience.
3. The U.S. Clerk's office will notify you when you have been appointed to a case and provide you with form instructions on how to submit payment vouchers. The current rate is \$100 per hour for non-capital cases. The U.S. Clerk's website mentioned above also provides information regarding the resources available to CJA Panel attorneys, such as investigators and expert services.
4. We here at the office of the Federal Public Defender (FPD), Western District of Texas, are another legal support resource available to the CJA Panel. Our website offers the Fifth Circuit Blog, legal publications on subjects such as the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, federal sentencing, and federal criminal appeals, and provides an index to our appellate brief bank and numerous legal links. If there are legal issues you need to speak with an attorney about, or if you need help with motions, the FPD is available to assist. All CJA Panel attorneys are welcome to e-mail me at wendy_branham@fd.org with their legal questions or requests. Additionally, the FPD sponsors annual local CLE training to all CJA Panel members, and anyone else interested in accepting federal criminal appointments. The CJA Panel is sent e-mail invitations and scheduled trainings are posted on our website, along with national training information.

Another person available to aid CJA attorneys is the CJA Panel District Representative, well known local criminal defense attorney John A. Convery. Mr. Convery has been the San Antonio CJA Panel Representative for many years and can be reached at his office at 210-738-9060 or by e-mail at **hasconpc@aol.com**.

We have a wonderful CJA Panel here in San Antonio. Good luck applying!

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