

Secretary

Details of Current Situation:

There are three Secretaries assigned to the Misdemeanor Intake/Reception area of the DA's Office. There is also a Legal I Secretary who splits her time between misdemeanor court secretary duties and Misdemeanor Intake/Reception support.

The situation with paper case filing:

These 3 ½ positions are responsible for the following tasks: staffing the Misdemeanor Reception Desk, which includes greeting and directing visitors and answering phone calls; responding to emails; receiving paper case files from agencies; creating case files; entering case file information into the Odyssey system; typing and filing informations for approved cases; typing and sending refusals, returns for more information and drop letters; processing Class C Appeals; and distributing mail. The newest Secretary is always assigned to cover the reception area and as time will allow, will create files and perform other supportive functions. The other 2 ½ employees are primarily responsible for entering the cases into the Odyssey system, typing and filing informations, refusals, returns for more information and drop letters.

This section of the DA's Office is subject to wide swings in productivity. This is because this area is staffed with entry-level positions in the office. This is the location where we discover if new employees will be able to make a career at our office. Employees who are successful in this new position are often, quickly promoted to fill another position in the office. This creates a vicious cycle of training, vacancy, hiring, and training in this area. If one of these 3 ½ employees is out on leave, or there are one or more vacancies, it can create large backlogs of intake cases. Without these employees, cases do not officially enter our office and cannot be filed, prosecuted, or refused. When fully staffed with trained employees, intake backlogs average between 0-100 cases. When not fully staffed and trained, backlog levels can rise as high as 200-300 cases. To avoid these fluctuations, an additional Secretary position was considered even under the paper filing system.

With paper filing, law enforcement agencies would usually drop off cases on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, leaving Mondays and Tuesdays available for our office to catch up on entering cases that were dropped off the previous week. The amount of cases dropped off per agency on any given day would vary between 10-100 cases, Most agencies did not file cases every week, except for Plano, Collin County's largest agency, would file two times a week. The front desk would check-in cases to locate and prioritize jail cases within 2-3 business days of arrival. Secretaries could enter paper cases into Odyssey averaging 10-15 cases an hour. Secretaries would spend approximately 12 hours of their week or 30% of their time entering cases into Odyssey—usually 3 days a week, 4 hours each day. Then they would spend the rest of their time handling the other duties defined

above. Cases would then reach the intake felony prosecutor for review within 7-10 business days. The intake felony prosecutor was able to review 40-50 cases per day. Intake backlogs of more than 200-300 cases would be rare.

The situation with electronic filing:

The Foray Technology evidence management system was rolled out in incremental stages beginning in FY2022. This system was implemented to ease the filing of cases and transfer of evidence between law enforcement agencies and our office and discovery between our office and defense attorneys. The implementation has naturally changed intake procedures. The changes are as follows:

1. Elimination of most paper files
2. Reduction of law enforcement agencies having to transfer media onto disks, thumb drives, and hard drives to send to the DA's Office.
3. Reduction of the DA's Office having to transfer discovery onto disks, thumb drives, and hard drives to send to defense attorneys.
4. Reduction in office storage space.

The adjustments that come with these conveniences are as follows:

1. Increased time needed to enter cases into Odyssey
2. Law Enforcement Agencies now have 24 hour, seven days a week filing capacity, while our intake staff can only process cases five days a week during normal office hours.

With electronic filing, all law enforcement agencies can enter cases seven days a week, 24 hours a day. There are no days without filings for DA staff to "catch up" and DA staff will come to work on a Monday, with an additional weekend's worth of filings added to the intake backlog. Agencies are filing on average 50 cases each weekend, totaling 2,600 cases a year. At first, Secretaries were able to enter on average eight cases each per day, but then increased to eleven cases each per day. Secretaries changed from entering cases 30% of the time, to 100% of the time. They are entering cases 5 days a week, 8 hours a day and getting less than half the cases entered as they did with paper files. The set up of the Foray System is such that it is not conducive to interruptions, making it impossible for the Secretary handling the front desk to enter cases into the system. Likewise, in the past, interns could assist the area by making paper files and doing other clerical work. With Foray, everything is online and interns do not have the credentials to assist with this system.

At the writing of this request, intake has approximately 1,800 backlogged cases, easily six times more than has ever been backlogged in that area. It takes intake Secretaries longer to enter cases into Odyssey, it takes the intake felony prosecutor longer to review cases she receives, and Secretaries no longer have the help of

interns or the employee handling the front desk. Over time, one additional Secretary position, could help us catch up and better manage this 24 hour, electronic filing.

Detailed Description of Request

One Secretary position to be placed in the Misdemeanor Intake area to enter electronic filings into Odyssey and other such related intake filing tasks.

Job Duties of New Position:

Creating forms, files, and entering data. Being proficient in the use of computer programs, copy machines, scanners, and phone systems. Indexing and preparing disposed files for storage; typing informations; filing informations; entering cases from Foray into Odyssey; assisting visitors; answering phones and responding to emails;

Statutory Authority for this Request:

Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Articles 32.01, 22.13(c) and 17.151 for filing deadlines.

Monthly/Quarterly Statistic Details Supporting Increase in Personnel:

With Paper Filing, Secretaries could enter 10-15 cases *an hour* and spent approximately three days a week entering cases, for approximately four hours a day. This resulted in 120 cases per week, per Secretary and 480 cases a month per Secretary. Considering this area is usually understaffed by one employee, we will multiply this productivity by 1.5 employees, for a total of 720 cases entered into Odyssey each month. This figure keeping pace with the 600-700 case filings by agencies each month, leaving little to no backlog.

With Electronic cases, Secretaries can enter 11 cases *a day* (instead of an hour) and spend approximately five days a week, eight hours a day entering cases, for a total of 55 cases entered per week, per Secretary. This results in 220 cases per month, per Secretary. Multiplying this productivity by 1.5 employees, for a total of 320 cases entered into Odyssey each month. This figure, backlogging 300 plus cases each month.

See Attached Chart

Return on Investment – Efficiencies Gained – Benefit to County and Citizens:

Electronic filing organizes cases by alphabet and not date of filing. If there is little to no backlog, this is not that important. When there is a backlog, it is very difficult to determine which cases are the oldest, which cases are approaching the statute of limitations, or which cases are jail cases. Without adequate staffing,

defendants may stay in jail longer, the statute of limitations may expire on cases and guilty individuals go free—their crimes not addressed. The longer cases wait to be processed means the longer it will take for rehabilitation programs to be ordered, the more likely the accused may commit new crimes, and that witnesses will disappear and their memories fade. The reverse being true with adequate staffing: Jail cases timely addressed; cases reviewed promptly; remedial or punitive measures for offenders rendered faster; and evidence/witnesses fresher.

Does Position Exist on Collin County's Compensation Plan? Y/N

Yes

Reason for requesting this particular title/grade:

This position will be doing the same or similar work as other Secretary positions in our office.