



Available Internship Divisions

Immigration Section

The U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Padilla v. Kentucky*, imposed a duty on defense counsel to advise noncitizen clients of the immigration consequences of a guilty plea/conviction. Our immigration specialists (also known as *Padilla* attorneys) work with defense counsel who represent noncitizens charged with felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile offenses in Harris County, Texas. Our *Padilla* attorneys provide defense counsel with written advisal memoranda on the immigration consequences of our noncitizen clients' pending charges and plea offers. The intern is supervised by the section director and will work closely with our *Padilla* attorneys. The intern will review a completed immigration referral submitted by defense counsel and determine the client's immigration history and status. The intern will consult with defense counsel and client. The intern will conduct research, analyze statutes employing the categorical approach, and write immigration advisal memos for defense counsel.

Immigration Section Intern Requirements:

- Preferably, a 2L with specific crim-immigration interest;
- Prior crim-imm course or plans to take crim-imm course;
- Plans to take an immigration clinic in law school;
- prior immigration related course work;
- prior Immigration law experience, i.e., worked at a nonprofit immigration legal services organization or immigration law office, prior to attending law school.

Juvenile Division

The juvenile division represents individuals accused of engaging in delinquent conduct between the ages of 10 and 16. The alleged delinquent conduct can range from misdemeanor offenses to allegations of capital murder. Our interns have the opportunity to experience the entire process from detention hearings to trial. They will court settings with attorneys, review case materials, participate in strategy sessions, conduct research, and write memorandums. While experiencing the juvenile division, the interns will also engage with other interns and participate in divisional and office-wide CLEs.

Mental Health Division

Our mission is first to keep people with mental illness and intellectual disability out of the jails and away from permanent, criminal justice-style consequences for their mistakes and struggles; and second, to provide what help, advice, pathways or resources we can in order to get them back on a better track.

Interns in the Mental Health Division will attend daily court dockets; work with a mental-health attorney on various stages of a criminal case (e.g., client meetings, bail hearings, investigation, scene visits, plea negotiations, trial); see how a problem-solving /collaborative court like the Felony Mental Health Court can improve people's lives; visit clients in Harris County Jail; put their legal writing skills to practical use writing motions, letters, and/or research memos; and attend division and office-wide legal trainings.

Appellate Division

The appellate division represents clients who have been convicted in the trial court. Upon appointment from the trial court, we have a motion for new trial team that immediately starts researching a client's case for possible issues to raise in a motion for new trial. We also represent our clients in the courts of appeals and Court of Criminal Appeals. Interns in the appellate division can work with the motion for new trial team and visit clients and go to court for hearings. Additionally, interns can work through an appellate record with the brief-writing attorney. In the past, we have had interns write substantial parts of briefs. The appellate division also provides CLE to other statewide public defender offices and interns are welcome to participate and attend.

Holistic Division

The Holistic Division of the Harris County Public Defender's Office supports clients by addressing the collateral consequences and enmeshed penalties that arise from involvement in the criminal legal system. Our work extends beyond the courtroom to include civil legal matters such as sealing criminal records, protecting clients' parental rights, developing and presenting life-history mitigation, and representing clients in parole and driver's license revocation proceedings. In addition to legal advocacy, the Holistic Division assists clients with critical non-legal needs, including reentry planning, psychological services, and access to education. Interns in the Holistic Division rotate through our multidisciplinary teams throughout the semester, gaining exposure to the wide-ranging impacts of system involvement on clients' lives and learning how the Public Defender's Office advocates for clients in a comprehensive, client-centered, and holistic way.

Felony Trial Division

The felony trial division represents people accused of felonies (state jail-first degree) in Harris County. Interns in the felony trial division will attend court settings and see the entire process of working up a case from intake to resolution – including trial. They will conduct discovery review and research and summarize legal issues for supervising attorneys. Interns will be able to interact with clients while shadowing attorneys at various points throughout the entire client representation. They will get to attend division and office-wide CLE trainings.

Wrongful Conviction Division

The Wrongful Conviction Division represents Harris County clients convicted of any level offense. Interns assist attorneys handling post-conviction habeas corpus litigation, primarily under Texas Code of Criminal Procedure art. 11.07. Responsibilities include reviewing trial and appellate records, summarizing transcripts and exhibits, conducting legal and factual research, assisting with drafting memoranda and writ pleadings, and helping identify potential claims (such as ineffective assistance, due process violations, and newly available evidence). Interns may also assist with record organization, large-scale research projects, citation checking, and investigative follow-up.

Misdemeanor Trial Division

The Misdemeanor Trial Division represents individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses in the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law. Because misdemeanor cases move quickly, interns experience the fast-paced nature of criminal defense and gain exposure to every stage of representation in a relatively short period of time. Interns attend daily court dockets, observe client interviews, plea negotiations, hearings, and trials, and assist attorneys with legal research, drafting motions and memoranda, reviewing discovery, and preparing cases for court. Working closely with attorneys, interns gain firsthand insight into client-centered advocacy, courtroom practice, and the day-to-day responsibilities of public defenders representing clients in one of the busiest misdemeanor court systems in Texas.