



# Electronic Court made Ez...

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TARRANT COUNTY, JUSTICE COURT, PCT. 1

JUDGE RALPH SWEARINGIN JR.

DAISY ESPINOZA- JUSTICE COURT MANAGER

# What to expect & how to make E-happen

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- In the beginning
- The transition (go and grow e-long the way)
- Benefits and challenges
- “Soft” mandating electronic filing
- COVID enter the world of Zoom
- Expanded E-Processes
- Where do we go from here? (Follow the yellow E-Road)

# In the beginning

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Odyssey - Our journey and evolution into the electronic and paperless world began with Tyler in June 2010 and with the implementation of the New Odyssey System.

E-File Texas - In June 2013 we went live with E-File Texas and shortly thereafter added “Guide and File” (E-File Self-Help)

Site Visits - Wanting to learn everything about the Electronic World, in late 2013, Judge, Court Manager, Clerk and IT began doing site visits to other Courts who were also beginning the move to a digital paperless world. (Williamson, Collin and Travis)

One Byte at a Time - Visiting other courts, we recognized that to get to paperless, we shouldn't try to implement paperless processes all at one time. We devoted our time, from 2015 to 2017 to analyze each of our paper processes to improve upon what we had in place. Our focus began in Civil cases

# The transition – Go & Grow E-Long the way

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May of 2017, we implemented our Eviction paperless process, which was followed by the Small Claim, Debt Claim and Repair and Remedy Paperless processes in October 2017.

In preparation for the transition, we evaluated each one of our paper process to outline and develop a model paperless process.

## Things to consider

- Visit other Courts
- Meet with your IT Person
- Review where paper is being utilized
  - What is the physical process that must be taken to ensure completion of a task
  - How can these be turned into electronic processes (one step at a time)
  - Begin scanning all cases into your case management system
- Plan & Execute your software & hardware needs (laptops, kiosks etc.)
- Step by Step Clerical Training



# Saddle up (“E-ddy up”) here we go.....

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From 2017 through 2018, we moved beyond Eviction and Civil cases and expanded our, “Paper to Electronic Processes”, in the following areas. We added;

- **E-Signatures (Judge and Clerks)** – Verification Processing
- **DocuSign/Adobe Fill and Sign** – which provides filers the ability to complete forms and sign electronically.
- **SharePoint** – is an electronic site that provides employees with the ability to review our paperless processes and procedures; as well as other important information. Additionally, it allows employees to electronically enter time off requests.
- The Court began collecting emails from all litigants. Additionally, we created and implemented a paperless e-mail process, giving us the ability to email citations to process servers electronically.
- As a compliment, we launched a paperless, electronic clock-in procedure that allows management to track employees time, utilizing our current time management (SAP) software.

# Mandating Electronic Filings

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Although we had implemented several electronic and paperless processes, we recognized that having our clerks process both paper and electronic filings was creating more work for them.

- At the Tyler conference in late 2018, after speaking to other Judges who had implemented paperless processes in their court; we recognized that we all shared the same concern... having our clerks operate in both a paper and electronic environment was creating more work. I told these Judges that I was going to try to fix the problem by mandating Electronic Filings for all civil cases.
- So, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, we posted notices that beginning July 2019 we would no longer accept paper filings, and everything must be filed electronically. (E-File, Guide and File, Email, Fax)
- Mandatory E-File (SC, DC and Eviction) – Began in July 2019
- Kiosk & How to/Step by Step – E & Paper Booklet

# COVID-19 and Remote Hearings

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February 2020 COVID became an issue. No longer could we conduct in person business and live hearings. However, because we had implemented many paperless and electronic processes, COVID had little to no impact in our court, ...the only area impacted was our ability to conduct live hearings.

In March 2020, OCA contacted the court to become a Justice Court pilot, utilizing Zoom to conduct remote hearings.

With current processes and via Zoom we were able to implement the following:

- Emergency Mental Health Warrants conducted via Zoom – (New electronic submission and hearing process)
- TXDPS DL Suspension/ Revocation Hearings conducted via Zoom
- Bench Trials for Eviction and all manner of Civil litigation
  - Travis County – Judge Chu has conducted Zoom Criminal Jury Trials



# COVID-19 and Remote Hearings- Continued

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- Criminal Pre-Trials and plea bargains with the ADA
- We further transitioned our paperless processes to include Occupational and Driver's License Cases; as well as Emergency Mental Health Warrant Cases
- Paperless Appeal Transfers to CCL - Currently working on a process for remanded appeals. 10/5/2020
- Now, our court can accept Appeals by way of E-File for all cases (SIP, Cash Bond, Sureties) – 10/26/2020 (Intake and Transfer)
- On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, we completely converted our **In-Court PTM program**, to a completely electronic process that facilitates mediation by Zoom.

# Zoom is here to stay (Growing Fans)

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## Advantage of Zoom Hearings

- Level of participation increases
- Requires less travel
- Saves time and \$\$\$
- Scheduling easier – Since we don't have to account for travel time

## Downside of Zoom Hearings (Zoom does not mean fast...)

- Technical difficulties (Wi-Fi connectivity (freeze), sound, battery issues etc.)
- Lack of user Knowledge
- Court Etiquette (Proper dress, background noise)
- Clerical expertise (Breakout rooms)
- Document sharing

*Our Court will continue to conduct hearings/trials via Zoom for the following: Dismissal Docket, Prove Up Hearings, All Motion Hearings, DL/SR Suspension Hearings, Criminal Docket Calls, Debt Claim Non-Jury Trials.*

# Court Clerk Procedural Tracking -CCPT

## (A Court's way to track cases and clerical errors)

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**Court Measures – Weekly report sent to all clerks and the Judge outlining the following:**

- List of cases pending to be set for hearing/trial
- List of all active/pending cases in the Court.
  - Case Numbers for EV, SC, DC, Writs, etc.
  - Administrative Cases (Handgun License, ODL, DL/SR Suspension hearings, Towing)
  - Misdemeanor Cases and Active Warrants

**Weekly Discrepancy Report – Sent weekly to Clerks and Judge**

- Items listed on the report are either missing an action by the clerk or were processed incorrectly.
- Clerks are to review each case and make the necessary correction. If this is a repeated mistake, they must respond in writing, explaining why these recurring mistakes are happening. Their response includes a correction plan for the mistakes and outlines what steps they will take to correct the issue.

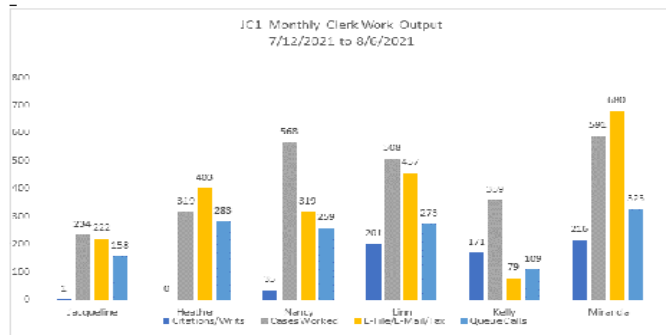
# Court Clerk Procedural Tracking -CCPT (A Court's way to track cases and clerical errors)-Continued

**From:** [Daisy Y. Espinosa](#)  
**To:** [JC1 Clerks](#)  
**Cc:** [Ralph D. Swearingin Jr.](#)  
**Subject:** Monthly Clerk Report Card- 7/12/2021 to 8/6/2021  
**Date:** Monday, August 9, 2021 1:29:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

**Every clerk is expected to perform at a 99.5 % accuracy rate monthly.** If you are not performing at the expected level, you must closely evaluate your work to ensure that you follow the Court's established procedures. Make adjustments to your process to improve and prevent mistakes/discrepancies in the future.

Additionally, the number below shows Judge and I the amount of work you perform each day throughout the entire week. There shouldn't be a vast difference in the total amount of work each of you handle. If your number is lower than other clerks, you need to evaluate how efficiently you perform your job duties. Although some areas cannot be measured, rest assured that we consider those when evaluating the work each of you perform on a weekly/monthly basis.

### Monthly Clerk Work Output



**Monthly Phone Calls Report – We received a total of 527 calls this week.**

	Number of Calls	Percentage of Calls
Carolina	0	0%
Jacqueline	158	11%

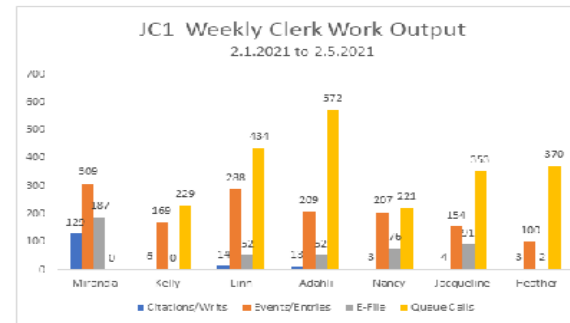
**From:** [Daisy Y. Espinosa](#)  
**To:** [JC1 Clerks](#)  
**Cc:** [Ralph D. Swearingin Jr.](#)  
**Subject:** Weekly Clerk Work Report - Meeting Recap (reply needed)  
**Date:** Friday, February 12, 2021 1:57:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
**Importance:** High

As discussed during our meeting, every clerk is expected to perform at a 99.5 % accuracy rate on a weekly/monthly basis. Remember that although work quantity is good, we must still maintain the quality of our work. If the quality of the work we put out is incorrect or lacking, this can lead to more work for you and your fellow clerks, thereby decreasing productivity.

Several reports will be sent to everyone weekly outlining where you fall based on the total amount of work performed in Odyssey (Citations/Writs; Odyssey Events and E-File) divided by the number of mistakes you make during the set period. Although phone calls are part of this report, the number of phone calls you intake does not play a role in the number of mistakes you make.

Take this information as a tool to improve. Focus on the areas you are lacking (making mistakes) and review your process to ensure that you make adjustments where they need to be made.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.



# Where we go from here?

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**In the next evolution of our digital transformation, we are working with Tyler and our IT department to accomplish the following:**

1. Remanded Appeals and electronic appeals for criminal cases
2. Electronic transfer process from JC to JC
3. TXDPS E-Filing of all DL Suspension/ Revocation cases across the State of Texas
4. Streamline and enhancing our Court Clerk Procedural Tracking process to all Odyssey users
5. Enhancing Guide & File to include a artificial intelligence component and,
6. Becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> JC in Texas to implement Tyler's ReSearch Texas program
7. E-Self check-in process (Tyler/Zoom etc.)
8. Visit other courts & non-governmental organizations/businesses for ideas

*We are glad to assist you - please feel free to call and visit our Court.*

***Contact Information***

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THANK YOU!