
Texas Municipal Courts Education Center

2026 BENCH BOOK



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CAVEAT

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.C.	Alcoholic Beverage Code
A.G.	Attorney General
Art.	Article
C.C.P.	Code of Criminal Procedure
Ch.	Chapter of Act of Legislation
DADAP	Drug and Alcohol Driving Awareness Program
D.L.	Driver's License
E.C.	Education Code
et al	and elsewhere
et seq.	(et sequentes) and those that follow
F.C.	Family Code
F. Supp.	Federal Supplement
Fin. C.	Finance Code
G.C.	Government Code
H.B.	House Bill
H.S.C.	Health and Safety Code
Infra	(Below) Refers the reader to an ensuing part of the book.
L.N.	Legislative Note
Leg.	Legislature
O.C.	Occupations Code
P.C.	Penal Code
P.W.C.	Parks and Wildlife Code
S.B.	Senate Bill
Supra	(Above) Refers the reader to a previous part of the book.
S.W.2d	Southwestern Reporter, Second Series
Sec.	Section
T.A.C.	Texas Administrative Code
T.C.	Transportation Code
Tex. Crim. App.	Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
Tex. Ct. App.	Texas Court of Appeals
Tex. R. Civ. P.	Texas Rules of Civil Procedure
TMCEC	Texas Municipal Courts Education Center
TMCA	Texas Municipal Courts Association
T.R.A.P.	Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure
T.R.E.	Texas Rules of Evidence
V.A.C.S.	Vernon's Annotated Civil Statutes

PREFACE

The TMCEC Bench Book is a reference guide for Texas municipal judges serving as both trial court judges and magistrates. This 16th edition, titled the *TMCEC 2026 Bench Book*, incorporates important statutory changes from the 89th Regular Legislature as well as the 89th Legislature's Second Special Session.

We have done our best to provide procedural guidance reflecting the law as it stands at the time of publication, while noting where statutory changes will take effect in the months and years ahead.

This book frequently references *The Recorder* and the *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*. Both resources are available on TMCEC's website at www.tmcec.com.

TMCEC's publications and educational offerings are made possible through the collaborative efforts of the TMCEC staff: Ryan Kellus Turner, Regan Metteauer, Ned Minevitz, Madison Mondragon, Leandra Quick, Elaine Riot, Elizabeth De La Garza, Deadra Stark, Matthew Kelling, Cameron Coburn, Tayler Adams, Brandi Valentine, Adrienne Schroeder, Crystal Ferguson, Dina Powell, and Antaris Jackson.

Significant gratitude is owed to the countless calls TMCEC receives on the toll-free legal line. These inquiries often prompt thoughtful discussion, debate, and revision, ultimately leading to stronger publications. We are also indebted to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center's Board of Directors, and our constituents for their continued support of TMCEC.

The TMCEC Bench Book has grown over the years through the contributions of many individuals. This Bench Book is a perpetual work in progress, and we welcome continued comments and suggestions. The original version was published in 1996, and each subsequent edition has benefited from the insight and experience of municipal judges and court personnel across Texas.

Mark Goodner
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Texas Municipal Courts Education Center
January 2026

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CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

There is no statutory definition of a “magistrate,” but Article 2A.152, C.C.P., does tell us the duty of magistrates:

It is the duty of every magistrate to preserve the peace within his jurisdiction by the use of all lawful means; to issue all process intended to aid in preventing and suppressing crime; to cause the arrest of offenders by the use of lawful means in order that they may be brought to punishment.

The duty, as defined above, is broadly worded, but this chapter as well as Chapter 2 will outline in further detail many of the duties that municipal judges have as magistrates. As magistrates, municipal judges serve an important gate-keeping function in the adjudication of all criminal matters, playing an active role in the beginning stages of the life of a criminal action.

While every member of the judiciary in Texas is a magistrate, municipal judges and justices of the peace perform more magistrate duties than all other members of the judiciary combined. Magistrates generally have co-equal jurisdiction with all other magistrates within the county, and their jurisdiction is coextensive with the limits of the county. *Gilbert v. State*, 493 S.W.2d 783 (Tex. Crim. App. 1973), and *Ex parte Clear*, 573 S.W.2d 224 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978). In 2025, the Legislature created distinct requirements and limitations for magistrates appointed under Chapter 54 of the Government Code. Accordingly, the checklists in this chapter do not address or apply to those magistrates.

As magistrates, municipal judges are authorized to inform adult offenders of their respective rights as required by law. This is one of the most common and important functions of a magistrate. The duties of arresting peace officers and of magistrates are detailed in Article 14.06, C.C.P., which provides that peace officers must take the accused before a magistrate when a warrantless arrest is made pursuant to one of the exceptions to the warrant requirement. Such exceptions are stated in Chapter 14, C.C.P. Similarly, Article 15.17, C.C.P., requires that individuals arrested pursuant to a warrant also be brought before a magistrate. Presentation before a magistrate must take place without unnecessary delay, but in no event more than 48 hours after the person is arrested. Article 15.17, C.C.P.

Texas law contains no specific term or phrase for the presentation of the accused before a magistrate. The lack of a statutory term has resulted in the use of various terms (e.g., “magistration,” “15.17 hearing”), which leads to potential confusion. In the past, the U.S. Supreme Court has referred to the accused’s presentation before the magistrate as an “initial appearance,” although the term “magistration” appears to be gaining popularity. In 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Rothgery v. Gillespie County*, 554 U.S. 191, noted the lack of a formal term for what they acknowledged as “magistration.” While the Court of Criminal Appeals has shown no preference for any one term, it has taken issue with courts and attorneys erroneously referring to it as an “arraignment.” *Watson v. State*, 762 S.W.2d 591 (Tex. Crim. App. 1988). An arraignment involves fixing the identity of the offender and taking a plea. See Checklist 6-2.

Generally, a magistrate is involved in the preliminary stages of a criminal proceeding. Such proceedings involve adults accused of criminal offenses. Because juvenile justice laws in Texas are civil, the preliminary stages of a child being taken into custody are governed by Title 3, F.C., not Article 15.17, C.C.P. In this sense, children who are taken into custody are not “magistrated” in the same manner as adults. Magistrates are, however, frequently involved in the procedures governing the taking of a confession by a child. See Checklists 13-26 and 13-27.

For more information on the role of magistrates, see *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*, Chapter 1.

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

1. Magistrate’s Warnings and Setting Bail for Adult

Checklist 1-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Determine whether the person has been (1) subject to custodial arrest; or (2) arrested and released after being issued a citation for an enumerated Class A or B misdemeanor.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Subject to custodial arrest:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Determine probable cause.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (A) If arrest is by a warrant, no further inquiry as to probable cause is needed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (B) If arrest is without a warrant, conduct a probable cause hearing either by sworn testimony or written affidavit to review the facts and circumstances of the arrest to determine if probable cause exists for continued detention of arrestee.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) If there is no probable cause, release the arrestee and enter written findings in support of this determination.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) If there is probable cause, proceed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Appearance before a magistrate may be in person or through a videoconference allowing two-way communication of image. A record of the communication between the arrested person and the magistrate shall be made.</p>	<p><i>Gerstein v. Pugh</i>, 420 U.S. 103 (1975).</p> <p><i>County of Riverside v. McLaughlin</i>, 500 U.S. 44 (1991).</p> <p>Magistrate to use a practical common sense approach to determine probable cause by considering all facts presented under oath; the “totality of the circumstances” test to determine whether there is a fair probability that the arrestee committed the offense with which he or she is charged. <i>Guzman v. State</i>, 955 S.W. 2d 85 (Tex. Crim. App. 1997).</p> <p>Art. 15.17(h), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Release: Magistrate’s Determination of No Probable Cause.</p> <p>Art 15.17, C.C.P. A videoconference includes secure internet conferencing.</p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Citation for enumerated Class A or B misdemeanor:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) If the person resides in the county where the offense occurred, a peace officer who is charging a person with committing an offense that is an enumerated Class A or B misdemeanor may, instead of taking the person before a magistrate pursuant to Article 14.06(a), C.C.P., issue a citation to the person that contains written notice of the time and place the person must appear before a magistrate, the name and address of the person charged, and the offense charged.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Citations may only be issued for the following enumerated Class A or B misdemeanors:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (A) Possession of four ounces or less of marihuana;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (B) Possession of four ounces or less of a substance in Penalty Group 2-A;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (C) Criminal mischief, where the value of damage done was \$100 or more but less than \$750;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (D) Graffiti, where the value of the damage done was \$100 or more but less than \$2,500;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (E) Theft, where the value of the property stolen was \$100 or more but less than \$750, or the value of property obtained by a hot check was \$20 or more but less than \$500;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (F) Theft of a service, where the value of the service stolen was \$100 or more but less than \$750;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (G) Tampering with a governmental record, if the record is a temporary tag issued under Chapter 502 or 503, Transportation Code;</p> | <p>Art. 14.06(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p>Art. 14.06(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p>Sec. 481.121(b)(1)-(2), H.S.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 481.1161(b)(1)-(2), H.S.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 28.03(b)(2), P.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 28.08(b)(2)-(3), P.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 31.03(e)(2)(A), P.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 31.04(e)(2), P.C.</p>
<p>Sec. 37.10(c)(6), P.C.</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (H) Possession of contraband in a correctional facility, if the offense was punishable as a Class B misdemeanor; and <input type="checkbox"/> (I) Driving with an invalid license, if the defendant has a prior driving with invalid license conviction. | <p>Sec. 38.114, P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 521.457(f), T.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (3) If a person issued a citation pursuant to Article 14.06, C.C.P., appears before a magistrate, the magistrate shall perform the duties imposed by Art. 15.17, C.C.P., as if the person had been arrested and brought before the magistrate by a peace officer. | <p>Art. 15.17(g), C.C.P. This requirement applies to both those defendants issued a citation for an enumerated Class A or B misdemeanor and those issued a citation for a Class C misdemeanor.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (4) After the magistrate performs the duties imposed by this article, the magistrate, except for good cause shown, may release the person on personal bond. | <p>Art. 15.17(g), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (5) If a person issued a citation under Article 14.06(c) fails to appear as required by that citation, the magistrate before whom the person is required to appear shall issue a warrant for the arrest of the accused. | <p>Art. 15.17(g), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Identify yourself to the arrestee. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Determine if the arrestee sufficiently understands the English language or possesses any impairments. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. If necessary, swear in a qualified interpreter. | <p>Art. 38.30, C.C.P. See Checklist 12-5.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. If the arrestee is hearing impaired, obtain the services of an interpreter as provided by Article 38.31, C.C.P., to interpret the warning. | <p>Art. 15.17(c), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Determine the arrestee’s age at the time of the offense. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. If the arrestee has not reached his or her 17th birthday, or was under 17 at the time of the offense but is now 17 or older, use the juvenile admonishment (warning). <input type="checkbox"/> b. If the arrestee is at least 17 or was 17 at the time of the offense, continue. | <p>See Checklists 13-26 and 13-27.</p> |

7. Determine whether arrestee is currently on bail for a separate offense.

a. If a defendant is taken before a magistrate for committing a felony while released on bail in a pending felony case in the same county as the previous offense, the defendant may only be released on bail by the court before whom the case for the previous offense is pending or another court designated in writing by the court before whom the case for the previous offense is pending.

b. If a defendant taken before a magistrate for committing a felony while released on bail in a pending felony case in a different county from the previous offense, electronic notice of the charge must be promptly given to the court before whom the case for the previous offense is pending to reevaluate the bail decision, determine whether conditions were violated, and decide if other actions are necessary.

8. Advise the arrestee in clear language of the offense with which he or she is charged.

a. Name the offense.

b. Inform arrestee of any affidavit filed in the case.

Art. 15.17(a), C.C.P.

Art. 17.027(a)(1), C.C.P.

Art. 17.027(a)(2), C.C.P. Effective April 1, 2026, electronic notice of the charge must instead be given to the individual designated to receive electronic notices for the county in which the previous offense was committed, not later than the next business day after the date the defendant is taken before the magistrate. The name and contact information of the individual designated to receive such notices are included in the public safety report system. Art. 17.027(c), C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Magistrate’s Warning.

“You are charged with the offense of _____. It is a _____ Degree/Class Misdemeanor/Felony.”

- 9. Warn the arrestee of the following rights:
 - a. The right to remain silent;
 - b. That the arrestee is not required to make a statement and that any statement made can and will be used against the arrestee;
 - c. The right to have an attorney present during any interview with peace officers or prosecutors;
 - d. The right to terminate the interview at any time; and
 - e. The right to an examining trial if the offense charged is a felony.
 - f. If applicable, the magistrate shall inform the person that the person may file the ability to pay affidavit described by Art. 17.028(f), C.C.P.

- 10. The Vienna Convention on Consular Notifications requires that a foreign national be offered the opportunity to have his or her country's consulate notified that he or she is facing criminal action. The magistrate should do the following:

Although it is not constitutionally required for misdemeanors, it is a good practice to admonish all defendants of possible immigration consequences. *State v. Jimenez*, 987 S.W.2d 886 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999).

Art. 15.17(a), C.C.P.

Download the U.S. Dept. of State's *Consular Notification and Access* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/consularnotification.html>.

- a. Warn of the right to retain counsel.
- b. Warn of the right to request appointment of counsel if the person cannot afford counsel.

- c. Describe the local procedures, created by the district and county judges, for requesting appointment of counsel.
- d. Ensure reasonable assistance in completing the necessary forms.
- e. Appoint counsel, but only if the magistrate is designated by the local district and county judges as the appropriate authority under Article 26.04, C.C.P., to appoint counsel.
- f. Forward the completed paperwork to the appropriate designee if not designated by the local district and county judges to appoint counsel:
 - (1) Without unnecessary delay; and
 - (2) Not later than 24 hours after request for appointment.

- 12. After determining whether the person is currently on bail for a separate criminal offense and whether the bail decision is subject to Art. 17.027, C.C.P., admit the person to bail if allowed by law.

- 13. A record must be made in each case in which a person is arrested and taken before a magistrate for an Article 15.17 hearing. It may be written, recorded, or in other form adopted by the county, and it should include:

Only indigent defendants charged with a crime that may result in punishment by confinement are entitled to have an attorney appointed. However, if a court concludes that the interests of justice require representation by counsel, the court may appoint counsel. Art. 1.051, C.C.P. See Checklist 8-3 for indigence hearings.

Art. 15.17(a), C.C.P.

Art. 15.17(e), C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate Warning*.

- a. The magistrate informing the person of his or her right to request appointment of counsel;
 - b. The magistrate asking the person whether he or she wants to request appointment of counsel; and
 - c. Whether the person requested appointment of counsel.
14. Inquire if the arrestee understands his or her rights.
- a. A magistrate has a duty to clarify the rights if the arrestee indicates a lack of understanding.
 - b. A magistrate must ensure that reasonable assistance is given to the arrestee in completing the necessary forms for requesting appointment of counsel at the time of the Article 15.17 hearing.
 - c. A magistrate must ensure a defendant filing an alibity to pay affidavit under Art. 17.028(f) receives reasonable assistance in completing it.
15. Consider bail and pretrial release.

See Checklist 1-9 and Art. 26.04, C.C.P., if you are the designated authority to appoint counsel.

If a municipal judge appoints an attorney, the city may be responsible for paying the attorney, unless an interlocal agreement is entered to the contrary.

Art. 17.028(g-l)(2), C.C.P.

A magistrate cannot require a defendant to post bail in cash only. *Ex parte Deaton*, 582 S.W.2d 151 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979); *Ex parte Rodriguez*, 583 S.W.2d 792 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979); Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. JM-363 (1985). The exception to this rule is when a bond forfeiture has been declared and the defendant is arrested on a *capias*. The court may then require a cash bond. Art. 23.05, C.C.P. For more on bail bonds, see Art. 17.02, C.C.P.

18. Setting Bail

- a. Without unnecessary delay, but not more than 48 hours after the defendant is arrested, the magistrate shall make one of the following bail decisions after individualized consideration of all circumstances and of the factors required by Art. 17.15(a), C.C.P.:

- (1) grant a personal bond with or without conditions;
- (2) grant a surety or cash bond with or without conditions; or
- (3) deny bail in accordance with the Texas Constitution and other law.

- b. The magistrate shall impose the least restrictive conditions, if any, and the personal bond or cash or surety bond to reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance and safety of the community, law enforcement, and victim of the alleged offense.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate's Determination of Bail and Commitment Form*.

Art. 17.028, C.C.P.

See Checklist 1-5.

Art. 17.028(b), C.C.P. Neither the requirement to impose the least restrictive conditions and an amount to reasonably ensure appearance and safety in Art. 17.028(b) nor the rebuttable presumption in Art. 17.028(c) require the court to hold an evidentiary hearing not required by other law. Art. 17.028(c-1), C.C.P.

- ❑ c. Unless specifically provided by other law, there is a rebuttable presumption that bail, conditions of release, or both are sufficient to reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense. Art. 17.028(c), C.C.P.

- ❑ d. Bail schedules or standing orders inconsistent with Art. 17.028, C.C.P., or that authorize a magistrate to make a bail decision for a defendant without considering each of the factors in Art. 17.15(a), C.C.P., are not permitted. Art. 17.028(d), C.C.P.

- ❑ e. If the defendant is charged with a Class B misdemeanor or higher and is unable to give bail in the amount required by a schedule or order described by Art. 17.028(e), other than a defendant who is denied bail, provide the defendant with the opportunity to file a sworn affidavit, which must be substantially in the form provided in Art. 17.028(f), C.C.P. This applies at any time before or during the bail proceeding. Art. 17.028(f), C.C.P. Filing an affidavit is not required before a magistrate considers the defendant's ability to make bail under Art. 17.15, C.C.P. Art. 17.028(k), C.C.P.

- ❑ (1) To allow the magistrate to assess information relevant to the defendant's financial situation, the defendant must also complete the form under Art. 26.04, C.C.P. used to request appointment of counsel or a form promulgated by OCA. Art. 17.028(g), C.C.P.

- ❑ (2) The defendant is entitled to notice by the magistrate of the right to file this affidavit, reasonable assistance to complete the affidavit and the form, and prompt review by the magistrate on the bail amount. Art. 17.028(g-1), C.C.P. The review may be conducted by the magistrate making the bail decision under Art. 17.028(a) or may occur as a separate proceeding.

- (3) The magistrate shall consider the facts presented and the rules established by Art. 17.15(a), C.C.P. and shall set the defendant's bail.

Art. 17.028(h), C.C.P.
A written or oral statement obtained under Art. 17.028, C.C.P. or evidence derived from the statement may be used only to determine whether the defendant is indigent, to impeach direct testimony of the defendant, or to prosecute the defendant for an offense under Ch. 37, P.C. Art. 17.028(l), C.C.P.
- (4) If the magistrate does not set the defendant's bail in an amount below the amount required by a schedule or order described by Art. 17.028(e), C.C.P., the magistrate shall issue written findings of fact supporting the bail decision.

Art. 17.028(h), C.C.P.
- (5) If a delay occurs that will cause the review to be held later than 48 hours after the defendant's arrest, the magistrate or an employee of the court or of the county in which the defendant is confined must provide notice of the delay to the defendant's counsel or the defendant if he or she does not have counsel.

Art. 17.028(i), C.C.P. Each defendant for whom a review was not held within 48 hours of arrest must be reported to OCA.
- (6) If the defendant does not appear capable of executing an affidavit, the magistrate may enter an order or take other action authorized by Art. 16.22, C.C.P. (Early Identification of Defendant Suspected of Having a Mental Illness or Intellectual Disability).

Art. 17.028(j), C.C.P.
- f. In setting the amount of bail and any conditions of bail, the magistrate is to be regulated by the following rules:

Art. 17.15(a), C.C.P. The amount of bail and any conditions of bail must be in accordance with the Constitution, Arts. 17.20, 17.21, and 17.22, C.C.P. and the rules in Art. 17.15(a), C.C.P.

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Bail and any conditions of bail shall be sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the undertaking will be complied with.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(1), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) The power to require bail is not to be used to make bail an instrument of oppression.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(2), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The nature of the offense and the circumstances under which the offense was committed are to be considered, including whether the offense involved violence as defined by Article 17.03, C.C.P., or violence directed against a peace officer.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(3), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (4) The ability to make bail shall be considered, and proof may be taken on this point.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(4), C.C.P.
See Checklist 8-3 for determining ability to pay.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (5) The future safety of the victim of the alleged offense, law enforcement, and the community shall be considered.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(5), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (6) The defendant's criminal history record, including the public safety report and statewide telecommunications system maintained by DPS shall be considered, including any acts of family violence, other pending criminal charges, and any instances of failure to appear in court following release on bail.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(6), C.C.P.
A magistrate may make a bail decision regarding a defendant charged only with a misdemeanor punishable by a fine only or a defendant who receives a citation under Art. 14.06(c), C.C.P. without considering the factor required by Art. 17.15(a)(6). Art. 17.028 (m), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (7) The citizenship status of the defendant.</p> | <p>Art. 17.15(a)(7), C.C.P.</p> |

- g The public safety report system may not be the only item relied on by a judge or magistrate in making a bail decision.

- h. The court may also consider any other issues deemed appropriate including any or all of the following:
 - (1) The range of punishment for the offense charged;
 - (2) The arrestee’s community ties;

 - (3) Work record; or
 - (4) Family ties.
- i. If a pretrial services agency operates in the judicial district or county, order the arrestee to be interviewed and the information brought to you immediately.
- j. The magistrate may impose any reasonable condition related to safety of the victim or safety of the community.
- k. Bail may only be denied or temporarily denied in certain instances.

Art. 17.022(d)(1), C.C.P.
 A magistrate may set bail for a defendant charged only with a misdemeanor without ordering, preparing, or considering a public safety report if the system is unavailable for longer than 12 hours due to a technical failure at OCA.
 Art. 17.022(f), C.C.P.

A magistrate may order, prepare, or consider a public safety report in setting bail for a defendant who is not in custody at the time the report is ordered, prepared, or considered.
 Art. 17.022(g), C.C.P.

Ex parte Rubac, 611 S.W. 2d 848 (Tex. Crim. App. 1981).

Do you live in _____ County? How will you get to court if you are released? Does anyone else live with you?

Art. 17.40, C.C.P.

See Checklist 1-2.

l. If bail is denied or temporarily denied, make a written finding explaining the legal basis.

A defendant who is denied bail or who is unable to give bail in the amount required by any bail schedule or standing order shall be provided with the warnings in Art. 15.17, C.C.P. Art. 17.028(e), C.C.P.

m. Set the amount of bail.

“I now set bail at \$_____.”

n. Set conditions of bail.

See Checklist 1-6. “Further, I am setting the following conditions and I order you to abide by each and every one of them.” Where the alleged victim is a child younger than 18 years of age, see Art. 17.41, C.C.P. and *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Bail Condition Where Child is Alleged Victim*.

(1) Record each condition in writing; or

(2) Recite each condition into the record; and

(3) Require the arrestee to acknowledge that he or she understands each condition.

“Do you understand each of these conditions?”

(4) Provide written notice to the defendant of the conditions of release on bond and the penalties for violating a condition of release (or designate someone to provide the notice).

Art. 17.51(e), C.C.P. This must be a separate record. Art. 17.51(f), C.C.P.

- (5) As soon as practicable but not later than the next business day after the date a magistrate issues an order imposing, modifying, or removing a condition of release on bond, the clerk of the court shall send a copy of the order to the attorney representing the State and the sheriff of the county where the defendant resides. If the order prohibits the defendant from going near a child care facility or school, the clerk shall send a copy to the facility or school.

Art. 17.51, C.C.P. This may be sent electronically or in another manner that can be accessed by the recipient. Art. 17.51(d), C.C.P. The clerk may delay sending the copy of the order only if he or she lacks information necessary to ensure service and enforcement. Art. 17.51(b), C.C.P.

- ❑ (6) As soon as practicable but not later than the next day after the date a magistrate issues an order imposing a condition of bond on a defendant under Chapter 17, C.C.P. for a violent offense or an offense under Section 42.072, P.C., the magistrate shall notify the sheriff of the condition and provide to the sheriff the following:
 - ❑ (A) information listed in Section 411.042(b) (6), G.C.;
 - ❑ (B) the name and address of any named person the condition of bond is intended to protect, and if different and applicable, the name and address of the victim of the alleged offense;
 - ❑ (C) the date the order releasing the defendant on bond was issued; and
 - ❑ (D) the court that issued the order releasing the defendant on bond.

Art. 17.50, C.C.P.
 Offenses triggering the notification requirement include:

- (1) Murder under Sec. 19.02, P.C.;
- (2) Capital Murder under Sec. 19.03, P.C.;
- (3) Kidnapping under Sec. 20.03, P.C.;
- (4) Aggravated Kidnapping under Sec. 20.04, P.C.;
- (5) Indecency With a Child under Sec. 21.11, P.C.;
- (6) Sexual Assault under Sec. 22.011, P.C.;
- (7) Aggravated Assault under Sec. 22.02, P.C.;
- (8) Aggravated Sexual Assault under Sec. 22.021, P.C.;
- (9) Injury to a Child, Elderly Individual, or Disabled Individual under Sec. 22.04, P.C.;
- (10) Aggravated Robbery under Sec. 29.03, P.C.;
- (11) Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Disabled Individual under Sec. 21.02, P.C.;
- (12) Continuous Trafficking of Persons under Sec. 20A.03, P.C.;
- (13) Stalking under Sec. 42.072, P.C.; and
- (14) Any offense involving family violence, as defined by Sec. 71.004, Family Code.

- o. The magistrate shall, promptly but not later than 72 hours after the time bail is set, submit the bail form described by Sec. 72.038, G.C., in accordance with that section.

Art. 17.022(d)(2), C.C.P. Note that Sec. 72.038(c), G.C. provides that the person setting bail, an employee of the court that set the defendant’s bail, or an employee of the county in which the defendant’s bail was set must provide the form electronically to OCA through the public safety report system.

A magistrate may order, prepare, or consider a public safety report in setting bail for a defendant who is not in custody at that time. Art. 17,022(g), C.C.P.

See Checklist 1-5.

- 19. Consider the arrestee for release on personal bond.

- 20. Other restrictions:

- a. Magistrate does not have discretion to restrict the type of bail, cash, or surety, to the exclusion of the other. A magistrate may require a cash bond only when a forfeiture of bail has been declared. A magistrate may designate that personal recognizance bond be denied by stating “cash or surety” on the bail setting.
- b. A magistrate may not set differential bail based on the type of bond (e.g., \$200 cash or \$500 surety).
- c. A magistrate should not set bail as an instrument of oppression (i.e., too high in light of financial resources).

Ex parte Deaton, 582 S.W.2d 151 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979); *Ex parte Rodriguez*, 583 S.W.2d 792 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979); Art. 23.05, C.C.P.

Bail that is more than what the court would accept as a fine in a fine-only misdemeanor case is probably too high when there is no history of failing to appear.

- 21. Other consideration: If applicable, enter magistrate’s “Order for Emergency Protection.”

See Checklist 1-8.

- 22. Special procedures for fine-only offenses:

Art. 15.17(b), C.C.P.

- a. Magistrate may set surety/cash appearance bond.

- b. Magistrate may set personal bond.
- c. Magistrate may release without setting bond:
 - (1) Only in fine-only misdemeanors;
 - (2) Magistrate must give defendant the time and place to appear to answer to the charges against him or her in writing;
 - (3) Release without bond is not available if defendant has a prior felony or Class A or B misdemeanor conviction.

- 23. A magistrate may take a plea of guilty if person was arrested under warrant for a **fine-only offense** issued in a county other than the one in which the person is arrested.

- a. Magistrate has discretion to take a plea in lieu of setting bail.
- b. Defendant must make written plea of guilty or nolo contendere and waiver of jury trial.
- c. Magistrate shall:
 - (1) Set fine;
 - (2) Determine costs;
 - (3) Accept payment;
 - (4) Give credit for time served:
 - (A) Determine a period of time between eight and 24 hours;
 - (B) Credit of at least \$150 for each period of time.
 - (5) Determine indigence;
 - (6) On satisfaction of judgment, discharge the defendant.

Art. 15.17(b), C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Release: With Order to Appear.

Art. 15.18(a)(2), C.C.P.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Out-of-County Magistrate's Bench Judgment.

Art. 45A.262, C.C.P.

See Checklist 8-3.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

2. When Bail May Be Denied or Delayed

Checklist 1-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Bail may be denied in capital cases when the State presents proof evident that conviction and death sentence will result from trial.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A district judge may deny bail in non-capital cases when there is a substantial showing by the State within seven days of arrest that the defendant:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Is guilty of the charged felony, with two prior convictions; the second being subsequent to the first:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Both in point of time of commission of the offense; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Conviction;</p>	<p>Art. I, Sec. 11, Tex. Const.</p> <p>When a person accused of a felony is brought before a magistrate, the magistrate should contact the district court. Art. 17.21, C.C.P. If the court is not in session, then the magistrate may set the bail. Art. 17.22, C.C.P. Because Art. I, Sec. 11a, Tex. Const., provides that only a district judge may deny bail in certain non-capital cases and that the order denying the bail must be entered within seven calendar days of a defendant’s incarceration, a municipal judge exercising his or her authority as a magistrate should notify the district court immediately and send the warning sheet to the district court as soon as possible. Before release under Article 17.21, a magistrate must (1) ensure that the defendant has appeared before the magistrate and (2) consider the public safety report prepared under Article 17.022 for the defendant. Art 17.21(b), C.C.P.</p>

- b. Committed a felony while on bail for a prior felony for which he or she was indicted;
 - c. Committed a felony involving the use of a deadly weapon after being convicted of a prior felony; or
 - d. Committed a violent or sexual offense while under the supervision of a criminal justice agency of the State or political subdivision of the State for a prior felony.
3. The State’s burden is:
- a. To prove guilt of the defendant in Steps 2(a) and 2(c) above; or
 - b. That the offense was committed while on bail in Steps 2(b) or 2(d) above.
4. A judge or magistrate may deny bail pending trial for a defendant:
- a. Charged with a felony offense from the following provisions of the Penal Code, if committed against a child younger than 14 years of age:
 - (1) Chapter 21 (Sexual Offenses);
 - (2) Section 25.02 (Prohibited Sexual Conduct); or
 - (3) Section 43.25 (Sexual Performance by a Child);

Bills v. State, 796 S.W.2d 194 (Tex. Crim. App. 1990).

Art. I, Sec. 11a, Tex. Const.

Art. 17.153, C.C.P.

- (4) Section 20A.02 (Trafficking of Persons), if the defendant is alleged to have trafficked the child with the intent or knowledge that the child would engage in sexual conduct as defined under Section 43.25 or if the defendant benefited from participating in a venture that involved a trafficked child engaging in sexual conduct as defined under Section 43.25; or
- (5) Section 43.05(a)(2) (Compelling Prostitution); or
- b. Who has been found, by the magistrate or judge at a hearing by a preponderance of the evidence, to have violated a condition of bond set under Article 17.41, C.C.P., related to the safety of the victim or the safety of the community.
- 5. The court's order is reduced to writing.
- 6. In non-capital cases only, set aside the order after 60 days and set bail if the defendant has not been tried.
- 7. A district judge at a subsequent hearing to set or reinstate bail may deny bail to any person accused of a felony who is released on bail pending trial and whose bail is subsequently revoked or forfeited for a violation of a condition of release related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense or to the safety of the community.
- 8. A magistrate or judge may deny bail to any person who is accused of a felony or an offense involving family violence if the person has previously been released on bail and whose bail is subsequently revoked or forfeited for a violation of a condition of release. In order to deny bail, a magistrate or judge must determine by a preponderance of the evidence at a subsequent hearing that the person violated a condition of release related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense or to the safety of the community.

Art. I, Sec. 11b, Tex. Const.

Art. I, Sec. 11b, Tex. Const.

□ 9. A magistrate or judge may deny bail to any person who is arrested for (1) violating an order for emergency protection, (2) an offense involving family violence, (3) violating an active protective order rendered by a court in a family violence case (including a temporary ex parte order that has been served on the person), or (4) engaging in conduct that constitutes an offense involving the violation of any of the proceeding orders. Subsequent to being taken into custody, bail may be denied if, following a hearing, a judge or magistrate determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the person violated the order or engaged in the conduct constituting the offense.

Art. I, Sec. 11c, Tex. Const.

□ 10. Bail shall be denied, pending trial, to a person accused of committing one or more of the following offenses if the attorney representing the State demonstrates after a hearing either (1) by a preponderance of the evidence that the granting of bail is insufficient to reasonably prevent the person's willful nonappearance in court; or (2) by clear and convincing evidence that the granting of bail is insufficient to reasonably ensure the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense.

Art I, Sec 11d, Tex. Const.
At the hearing, a person is entitled to be represented by counsel. Art. I, Sec. 11d(f), Tex. Const.

For purposes of determining whether a preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing evidence, as applicable, exists as described by this section, a judge or magistrate shall consider: (1) the likelihood of the person's willful nonappearance in court; (2) the nature and circumstances of the alleged offense; (3) the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense; and (4) the criminal history of the person. Art. I, Sec. 11d(e), Tex. Const.

- a. murder;
- b. capital murder;
- c. aggravated assault if the person:
 - (1) caused serious bodily injury, as that term is defined by general law; or;
 - (2) used a firearm, club, knife, or explosive weapon, as those terms are defined by general law, during the commission of the assault;
- d. aggravated kidnapping;
- e. aggravated robbery;
- f. aggravated sexual assault;
- g. indecency with a child;
- h. trafficking of persons; or
- i. continuous trafficking of persons;

If granting bail, the judge/magistrate must: (1) set bail and impose only those conditions reasonably necessary to (a) prevent willful nonappearance; and (b) ensure the safety of community law enforcement, and any victim; and (2) issue a written order with findings of fact and an explanation supporting the bail decision and required determinations. Art. I, Sec. 11d(c), Tex. Const.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

3a. Release Because a Magistrate Has Not Determined Whether Probable Cause Exists

Checklist 1-3(a)	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. All persons arrested must be brought before a magistrate without unnecessary delay, never later than 48 hours after arrest.</p>	<p>Art. 15.17(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A person arrested without a warrant must be released if a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists to believe that the person committed the offense within a certain time frame.</p>	<p>This law presumably is used in the absence of a magistrate, as the release is triggered not when a magistrate has determined there is no probable cause, but rather when a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists at all.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. In misdemeanor cases, if a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A defendant arrested without a warrant must be released on bond not to exceed \$5,000, not later than the 24th hour after the arrest; or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The arrestee must be released on a personal bond if arrestee is unable to make or secure surety/cash appearance bond.</p>	<p>Art. 17.033(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. In felony cases, if a magistrate has not determined whether probable cause exists:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A defendant must be released on bond not to exceed \$10,000 not later than the 48th hour after the arrest; or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The arrestee must be released on a personal bond if arrestee is unable to make or secure surety/cash appearance bond.</p>	<p>Art. 17.033(b), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. On application by the prosecutor, the magistrate may postpone release for not more than 72 hours from arrest.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Application must state the reason why a magistrate has not made a probable cause determination.</p>	<p>Art. 17.033(c), C.C.P.</p>

- ❑ 6. The time limits for release as outlined above do not apply to a person arrested without a warrant who is taken to a medical facility before being taken before a magistrate. Such an arrestee's time limit begins to run at the time of release from the facility rather than from the time of arrest.

Art. 17.033(d), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

3b. When the Defendant Must Be Released Because the State is Not Ready

Checklist 1-3(b)	Script/Notes
<p>The magistrate that enters orders under Article 15.17, C.C.P., generally keeps jurisdiction of the defendant’s charge until a charging instrument (indictment, information, or complaint) is filed in a court with jurisdiction. Once the charging instrument has been filed in the cause, the magistrate has no further jurisdiction or responsibility.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. When the State is not ready and the defendant is unable to post the bail previously set, the defendant must be released on personal bond, or reasonable bail that the defendant can make must be set, if the defendant is charged with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Any grade of felony and he or she has been incarcerated for 90 days; <input type="checkbox"/> b. A misdemeanor punishable by 180 days in jail or more and he or she has been incarcerated for 30 days; <input type="checkbox"/> c. A misdemeanor punishable by 180 days in jail or less and he or she has been incarcerated for 15 days; or <input type="checkbox"/> d. A misdemeanor punishable by fine-only and he or she has been incarcerated for five days; and <p>The defendant is not otherwise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. Serving a sentence of confinement for another offense; 	<p><i>Guerra v. Garza</i>, 987 S.W.2d 593 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999).</p> <p>For a defendant charged with a felony, if bail is set under Article 17.028 by a magistrate who does not have jurisdiction to try the offense, a district judge has jurisdiction to modify the bail at any time, regardless of whether an indictment or information has been filed. See Checklist 1-7 below.</p> <p>Art. 17.151, C.C.P.; <i>Jones v. State</i>, 803 S.W.2d 712 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991).</p>

- f. Being detained pending trial of another case and time has not yet lapsed on that case;
 - g. Incompetent to stand trial, during a period of incompetence;
 - h. Being detained for a violation of the conditions of a previous release related to the safety of a victim of the alleged offense or to the safety of the community; or
 - i. Civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 841 of the Health and Safety Code.
2. When defendant is indigent, either reduce bail to an amount the defendant can post or release the defendant on personal bond, if allowed by law.

Absent a violation of bond condition, Art. 17.151, C.C.P., requires release on personal bond if the State is not ready to proceed to trial without consideration of the safety of either victims or the community. *Ex parte Gill*, 413 S.W.3d 425 (Tex. Crim App. 2013).

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

4. Requisites and Filing of a Bail Bond

Checklist 1-4	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Requisites of a bail bond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Made payable to “The State of Texas;” <input type="checkbox"/> b. Defendant and surety, if any, bind themselves that the defendant will appear before the proper court or magistrate to answer the accusation against him or her; <input type="checkbox"/> c. States whether the defendant is charged with a felony or misdemeanor; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Signed by name or mark of the defendant and surety, if any, with a mailing address for each; <input type="checkbox"/> e. States the time and place, when and where the defendant binds himself or herself to appear; <input type="checkbox"/> f. States the court or magistrate before whom to appear; <input type="checkbox"/> g. States that the defendant is bound to appear before any court or magistrate before whom the matter may be pending at any time and place required under law or by any court or magistrate; <input type="checkbox"/> h. Conditioned that the defendant and sureties, if any, will pay all necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by any and all sheriffs or other peace officers in re-arresting the defendant if failure to appear before the court or magistrate named in the bond at the time stated therein; and 	<p>Art. 17.08, C.C.P. See Art. 17.071, C.C.P., for the definition of and requirements for charitable bail organizations paying bail bonds.</p>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> i. Such expense shall be in addition to the principal amount of the bond.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> j. In addition to the requirements of Article 17.08, a bail bond for a defendant charged with an offense under Section 20A.02, 20A.03, 43.02, 43.03, 43.031, 43.032, 43.04, 43.041, or 43.05, Penal Code, must include the address, identification number, and state of issuance as shown on a valid driver's license or identification card for the defendant and any surety, including any agent executing the bail bond on behalf of a corporation acting as surety.</p> | <p>Art. 17.081, C.C.P</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Set any reasonable conditions that will assure the appearance of the defendant.</p> | <p><i>Ex parte Anderer</i>, 61 S.W.3d 398 (Tex. Crim. App. 2001). See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate's Determination of Bail and Commitment Form</i>.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Sureties, generally:</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If only one surety, must be worth at least double the amount of bail set less exempted, encumbered, or indebted property.</p> | <p>Art. 17.13, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Must be a resident of this state.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A corporate surety must have a power of attorney designating an authorized agent on file.</p> | <p>Art. 17.07, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. A minor may not be a surety.</p> | <p>Art. 17.10, C.C.P.</p> |

- e. A person who has signed as a surety on a bond and is in default is disqualified to sign as a surety as long as he or she is in default.

- f. A surety may file a motion for the purpose of discharging bail when no indictment or information has been timely presented against the defendant.

- 4. In any manner permitted by the county in which it is written, a bail bond may be filed electronically with the court, judge, magistrate, or other officer taking the bond.

Art. 17.11, Sec. 2, C.C.P. A surety is in default from the time execution may be issued on the final judgment in a bond forfeiture proceeding unless the final judgment is superseded by the posting of a supersedeas bond (a bond required of someone who petitions to set aside a judgment or execution). If surety is a corporation, see Section 1704.212(c), O.C. A corporation may not act as a bail bond surety in a county in which the corporation is in default on five or more bonds.

Art. 32.01, C.C.P.

Art. 17.026, C.C.P.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> k. No oath is required for an arrestee with a mental illness or intellectual disability, or if the defendant is released on personal bond under 17.032, C.C.P., or is found incompetent to stand trial in accordance with Chapter 46B, C.C.P. 	<p>Art. 17.04(b), C.C.P.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Arrestees charged with the following may not be released on personal bond (except as provided by Arts. 15.21, 17.032, 17.033, and 17.151, C.C.P.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Offenses involving violence; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Murder as a result of manufacture or delivery of a controlled substance in Penalty Group 1-B under 19.02(b)(4), P.C.; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Violation of certain court orders or conditions of bond in a family violence, child abuse, or neglect, sexual assault or abuse, indecent assault, stalking, or trafficking case under 25.07, P.C.; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Unlawful possession of a firearm under 46.04(a), P.C.; <input type="checkbox"/> e. A felony assault under 22.01(a)(1), P.C.; <input type="checkbox"/> f. Deadly conduct under 22.05, P.C.; <input type="checkbox"/> g. Terroristic threat under 22.07, P.C. if the offense is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor or higher; or <input type="checkbox"/> h. Disorderly conduct involving a firearm under Sec. 42.01(a)(7) or (8), P.C., while released on bail, parole, or community supervision for an offense involving violence. 	<p>Art. 17.03(b-2), C.C.P.</p> <p>For a list of “offenses involving violence,” see Art. 17.03(b-3)(2), C.C.P.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Only the court before whom the case is pending may release on personal bond a defendant who is charged with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Burglary; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Organized criminal activity; 	<p>Art 17.03(b), C.C.P.</p>

- c. Any aggravated felony under Chapter 481 or Section 485.033, H.S.C.; or
- d. Failure to submit to testing as required by the court or a magistrate or whose test results for alcohol or drugs are positive.
- 4. Order drug or alcohol testing, education, and treatment if you, or the investigating or arresting law enforcement officer, reasonably believe:
 - a. That drug or alcohol abuse was related to the offense; or
 - b. Drugs or alcohol are presently in the body of the defendant; and
 - c. The condition will serve to reasonably assure the appearance of the defendant in court.
- 5. Costs of testing may be assessed as a condition of bond or as court costs.
- 6. If a charge has been filed in your municipal court, you may not assess a personal bond reimbursement fee.
- 7. Order the personal bond fee:
 - a. Paid before the defendant is released;
 - b. Paid as a condition of bond;
 - c. Paid as court costs;
 - d. Reduced; or
 - e. Waived.

Art. 17.03(c), C.C.P.

Art. 17.03(e), C.C.P.

A municipal judge releasing a defendant charged with a Class C misdemeanor under Article 45A.107, C.C.P., may not assess a personal bond reimbursement fee. Art. 17.42(4)(a), C.C.P.

Arts. 17.03(g) and 17.42, C.C.P. Bond fees can be assessed only if a court releases a defendant on a personal bond at the recommendation of a personal bond office before sentencing on a pending case.

- 8. Release an offender with a mental illness or intellectual disability, unless good cause is shown otherwise, if:
 - a. The defendant is not charged with and has not previously received deferred adjudication, community supervision or probation, any deferred final disposition of a case, or a final conviction for:
 - (1) Murder;
 - (2) Capital murder;
 - (3) Kidnapping;
 - (4) Aggravated kidnapping;
 - (5) Indecency with a child;
 - (6) Assault (Class A);
 - (7) Sexual assault;
 - (8) Aggravated assault;
 - (9) Aggravated sexual assault;
 - (10) Injury to a child, elderly person, or invalid;
 - (11) Aggravated robbery;
 - (12) Continuous sexual abuse of young child or children; or
 - (13) Continuous trafficking of persons; and
 - b. The defendant is examined by a mental health or intellectual and developmental disability expert as provided in Art. 16.22, C.C.P.;

Art. 17.032(b), C.C.P.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Release: Personal Bond - Certain Mentally Ill Defendants*. This is a requirement notwithstanding Art. 17.03(b) or an adopted bond schedule or standing order entered by a judge.

- c. The written report submitted by the applicable expert under Art. 16.22, C.C.P. concludes the defendant is a person with mental illness and is nonetheless competent to stand trial and recommends treatment or services;
 - d. Appropriate community based mental health or intellectual disability services are available for the defendant under Section 534.053 or 534.103, H.S.C., or through another mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services provider; and
 - e. The magistrate finds, after considering all the circumstances, a pretrial risk assessment, if applicable, and any other credible information provided by the attorney representing the state or the defendant, that release on personal bond would reasonably ensure the defendant's appearance in court as required and the safety of the community and the victim of the alleged offense.
9. Unless good cause is shown, order as a condition of bond that the defendant submit to outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment or intellectual and developmental disability services if the defendant's:
- a. Mental illness or intellectual disability is chronic in nature; or
 - b. Ability to function independently will continue to deteriorate if the defendant does not receive the recommended treatment or services.
10. Consider imposing any other conditions reasonably necessary to ensure the defendant's appearance in court to protect the community and the victim of the alleged offense.

See Checklist 1-11.

Art. 17.032(c), C.C.P.

Arts. 17.032(d), C.C.P.

11. If the county from which the warrant of arrest was issued has a personal bond office, a copy of the bond must be forwarded to the personal bond office in that county.

Art. 17.031(b), C.C.P.

The personal bond office shall create a record of persons released on personal bond, update it monthly, and file a copy of the record with the district or county clerk. Art. 17.42, Sec. 5, C.C.P.

12. A municipal judge may require a personal bond to secure the defendant's appearance in accordance with this code, but may not, either instead of or in addition to the personal bond, require a defendant to give a bail bond unless:

Upon the filing of charges, a specific rule applies to bail set by municipal and justice courts. See Art. 45A.107(a)-(b), C.C.P.

a. The defendant fails to appear with respect to the applicable offense;

b. The judge determines that the defendant has sufficient resources or income to give a bail bond; and

c. The judge determines that a bail bond is necessary to secure the defendant's appearance in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure.

13. If a defendant required to give a bail bond by a municipal judge does not give a required bail bond within 48 hours of the bail bond being set, the justice or judge:

Art. 45A.107(c), C.C.P.

a. Shall reconsider the requirement for the defendant to give the bail bond and presume that the defendant does not have sufficient resources or income to give the bond; and

b. May require the defendant to give a personal bond.

14. If the defendant refuses to give a personal bond or, except as provided by Art. 45A.107(c), C.C.P., refuses or otherwise fails to give a bail bond, the defendant may be held in custody.

Art. 45A.107(d), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

6. Conditions of Bail

Checklist 1-6	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Magistrates have the general discretion to impose any of the following as conditions of release for any offense:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Any reasonable condition related to the safety of the victim of the alleged offense or the safety of the community. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Home curfew and electronic monitoring. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Weekly drug testing for controlled substances. <input type="checkbox"/> d. Providing to a local law enforcement agency one or more specimens for the purpose of creating a DNA record under Subchapter G, Chapter 411, G.C. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Magistrates have the discretion to impose any of the following as conditions of release for the following specific offenses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. An offense involving family violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Refrain from going to or near a residence, school, place of employment, or other location as specifically described in the bond, frequented by an alleged victim of the offense; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Carry or wear a global positioning system (GPS) device and pay the costs associated with the device; 	<p>Art. 17.40, C.C.P.</p> <p>Arts. 17.43 and 17.44(a)(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17.44(a)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17.47(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17.49(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Before imposing this condition, a magistrate must give the victim an opportunity to provide a list of areas from which the victim would like the defendant excluded. Art. 17.49(c), C.C.P.</p>

- (3) Pay the reimbursement fee associated with providing the victim a receptor that can receive information from the GPS device worn by the defendant and that notifies the victim if the defendant is at or near a prohibited location. Before imposing this condition, a magistrate must provide to an alleged victim information regarding:
 - (A) the victim’s right to participate in a global positioning monitoring system or to refuse to participate in that system and the procedure for requesting that the magistrate terminate the victim’s participation;
 - (B) the manner in which the global positioning monitoring system technology functions and the risks and limitations of that technology, and the extent to which the system will track and record the victim's location and movements;
 - (C) any locations that the defendant is ordered to refrain from going to or near and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from those locations;
 - (D) any sanctions that the court may impose on the defendant for violating a condition of bond imposed under Art. 17.49, C.C.P.;

If the magistrate determines that a defendant is indigent, the magistrate may require the defendant to pay a reimbursement fee based on a sliding scale established by local rule in an amount less than the full amount associated with operating the GPS system. Art. 17.49(h) and (i), C.C.P.

Art. 17.49(d), C.C.P.

- (E) the procedure that the victim is to follow, and support services available to assist the victim, if the defendant violates a condition of bond or if the global positioning monitoring system equipment fails;
 - (F) community services available to assist the victim in obtaining shelter, counseling, education, child care, legal representation, and other assistance available to address the consequences of family violence; and
 - (G) the fact that the victim's communications with the court concerning the global positioning monitoring system and any restrictions to be imposed on the defendant's movements are not confidential; or
- (4) Refrain from tracking or monitoring personal property or a motor vehicle in the possession of the alleged victim of the offense, without the victim's effective consent, including by using a tracking application on a personal electronic device or physically following the victim or causing another to physically follow the victim.
- b. Prostitution:
- (1) Attend AIDS/HIV education; and/or
 - (2) Attend AIDS/HIV counseling.

Art. 17.45, C.C.P.

- c. Stalking:
 - (1) No direct or indirect communication with the alleged victim; or
 - (2) Prohibited from going near a residence, place of employment, or business of the victim or to go near a school, day-care facility, or similar facility where a dependent child of the victim is in attendance.

Art. 17.46, C.C.P.

Note: The magistrate must specifically describe the prohibited locations and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from the locations.

- 3. Magistrates are required to impose specific conditions of release for the following specific offenses:

- a. If the charge is a subsequent Driving, Flying, or Boating While Intoxicated (with or without a child passenger), Intoxication Assault or Intoxication Manslaughter, the magistrate shall require on release that a defendant:

Art. 17.441, C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Bail with Ignition Interlock Condition. A magistrate may designate an appropriate agency to verify the installation of the device and to monitor the device. Magistrates may not require the installation of the device if the magistrate finds that to do so would not be in the best interest of justice.

- (1) Have installed on the motor vehicle owned or most regularly operated by the defendant a vehicle ignition interlock device;
- (2) Not operate any motor vehicle unless the vehicle is equipped with that device;
- (3) Have the device installed on appropriate motor vehicle within 30 days of release on bond; and
- (4) Pay the expense of installation.

- b. Trafficking of persons, sexual offenses, assaultive offenses, public indecency, or prohibited sexual conduct, if committed against a child under 18 years old:

Art. 17.41, C.C.P.

- (1) No direct communication with the alleged victim;

- (2) Prohibited from going near a residence, school, or other location as specifically described in the bond, frequented by the alleged victim.

- c. As a condition of release on bond for a defendant charged with an offense under section 20A.02, 20A.03, 43.03, 43.031, 43.032, 43.04, 43.041, or 43.05, P.C., against a person 18 years of age or older, the magistrate shall require that the defendant not:
 - (1) Communicate directly or indirectly with the victim; or

 - (2) Go to or near the residence, place of employment, or business of the victim; or if applicable, go to or near a school, day care facility, or similar facility where a dependant child of the victim is in attendance.

- d. If the charge is “Aggravated Kidnapping with Intent to Inflict Injury or Sexual Abuse,” “Indecency with a Child,” “Sexual Abuse,” “Sexual Assault,” “Aggravated Sexual Assault,” “Prohibited Sexual Conduct,” “Burglary of a Habitation with/or without Intent to Commit a Felony (excluding felony theft),” “Compelling Prostitution,” “Sexual Performance by a Child,” or “Possession or Promotion of Child Pornography,” the defendant shall provide to a local law enforcement agency one or more specimens for the purpose of creating a DNA record under Subchapter G, Chapter 411, G.C.

Note: To the extent that this condition conflicts with an existing court order granting possession or access to a child, this order prevails for a period specified by the magistrate, not to exceed 90 days.

Art. 17.465, C.C.P.

Under Art. 17.465(c), C.C.P., the magistrate shall specifically describe the prohibited locations under subsection (b)(2) and the minimum distances, if any, that the defendant must maintain from the locations.

Art. 17.47(b), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

7. When Bail May Be Raised, Changed, or Forfeited

Checklist 1-7	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Bail may be changed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The initial bail bond is defective; <input type="checkbox"/> b. The initial bail bond is excessive; <input type="checkbox"/> c. The initial bail bond is insufficient; <input type="checkbox"/> d. The sureties, if any, are not acceptable; <input type="checkbox"/> e. The initial bail was set prior to indictment and indictment is returned; or <input type="checkbox"/> f. The initial bail bond was conditioned upon treatment under Article 17.40, C.C.P., and that condition is violated. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Bail may not be raised or forfeited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Without cause; <input type="checkbox"/> b. If the defendant fails to hire counsel as ordered by the court; or 	<p>Art. 17.09, Sec. 3, C.C.P. To modify a bond set by a magistrate, a judge generally must have jurisdiction over the case, which vests upon the filing of a charging instrument in the proper trial court; however, in felony cases, a district judge may review and modify a bail decision set by a magistrate of a court that lacks jurisdiction to try the charged offense regardless whether a charging instrument has been filed. <i>Guerra v. Garza</i>, 987 S.W.2d 593 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999); Art. 17.029, C.C.P.</p> <p><i>Ex parte King</i>, 613 S.W.2d 503 (Tex. Crim. App. 1981).</p> <p>Art. 11.56, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 22.021, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17.09, Sec. 3, C.C.P.</p>

- c. If defendant appears within a reasonable time.

Art. 22.02, C.C.P.

Three to five minutes late is not enough to raise or forfeit bail, with no prior forfeiture history. *Meador v. State*, 780 S.W.2d 836 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1989, no pet.).

- 3. Bail may only be reduced under certain circumstances:

- a. In certain instances, magistrates are required counsel as ordered by the court; to provide reasonable notice of a proposed bail reduction and an opportunity for a hearing to the attorney representing the state or the defendant’s counsel.

Art. 17.091, C.C.P. Note: This requirement only applies to offenses listed in Section 3g, Article 42A.054, C.C.P., an offense described by Article 62.001(5), C.C.P. (defining “reportable conviction or adjudication”), or any felony offense committed while the defendant is civilly committed as a sexually violent predator under Ch. 841, H.S.C

- b. A magistrate described by Art. 2A.151(5)-(14), C.C.P. (includes a municipal judge) may not reduce the amount or conditions of bond set by the judge of a district court, including the judge of a district court in another county.

Art. 17.092, C.C.P.

- b. Abuse of a child of the family or household by a member of the family or household; or
 - c. Dating violence, where victim and defendant have a dating relationship (more than a casual acquaintanceship or ordinary fraternization).
4. Based upon the information provided supporting the arrest of the defendant, consider whether a MOEP order is necessary.

Sec. 71.0021, F.C.

The arresting officer, a person making a complaint, or any person presenting a defendant to a magistrate for a 15.17 hearing must provide the magistrate with available information about the defendant, and, if available, the victim, to assist in issuing an order for emergency protection. At a minimum, the information described by Sec. 411.042(b)(6), G.C. must be provided.. Failure to provide the required information does not limit the magistrate's authority or duty to issue an order for emergency protection or affect the sufficiency of the complaint. Arts. 15.052, 15.17(a-2), 17.292(d-3), C.C.P.

- a. At a defendant's appearance before a magistrate after an arrest for a family violence offense, a magistrate shall issue an order for emergency protection for offenses involving:
 - (1) Serious bodily injury to the victim; or
 - (2) The use or exhibition of a deadly weapon during the commission of an assault.
5. Identify the:
- a. Victim;
 - b. Members of the victim's family or household; and

Art. 17.292(b), C.C.P.

- c. Children.
- 6. Identify the:
 - a. Residence;
 - b. Place of employment or business; and
 - c. School or child care facility where a child to be protected by the order is in attendance or is enrolled.
- 7. Determine the minimum distances the defendant must maintain from each location.
- 8. Determine whether the children, if any, should be protected by the order.
- 9. Determine if the location is within:
 - a. A municipality; or
 - b. The unincorporated part of the county.
- 10. Determine whether a family lawsuit involving the parties is pending.
- 11. The MOEP controls over other court orders with conflicting conditions, including child custody orders, while the MOEP is pending, unless:
 - a. The order is a protective order issued by a family court after a hearing; or
 - b. The order is an ex parte order of the family court that was aware of the MOEP and specifically dictates that the new order controls.
- 12. Determine if possession of firearms should be prohibited. Magistrates should note if the defendant is a peace officer.
- 13. Determine if the defendant has a handgun license.

If an order for emergency protection prohibits a person from going to or near a child care facility or school, the magistrate shall send a copy of the order to the child care facility or school.
Art. 17.292(i), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(e), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(f), (f-1) and (f-2), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(f), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(f-1), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(f-2), C.C.P.

Sec. 46.04, P.C.

Arts. 17.292(l) and 17.293, C.C.P.

a. You are required to suspend the handgun license.

b. Upon suspension of the license, you or the clerk must immediately send a copy of the order to DPS.

Attention: Suspension/ Revocation,
Texas Department of Public Safety,
Handgun Licensing, Section
#0235, P.O. Box 4143, Austin,
Texas 78765-4143 512.424.2000,
ext. 3.

14. Determine if a condition should be imposed as described by Article 17.49(b), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292, C.C.P.

15. Identify the defendant on the order by date of birth.

16. Enter these findings in the protection order.

17. Consider which prohibitions will be a part of the order. Magistrates may prohibit the arrested party from:

Art. 17.292, C.C.P.

a. Committing family violence or an assault on the person protected under the order;

b. Committing an act in furtherance of a Trafficking of Persons or Stalking offense;

c. Communicating directly with the person protected or with a member of protected person's family or household in a threatening or harassing manner;

d. Communicating a threat through any person to a member of the protected person's family or household or to the person protected under the order;

e. Communicating, if the magistrate finds good cause, in any manner with a person protected under the order or a member of the family or household of a person protected under the order, except through the party's attorney or a person appointed by the court;

- f. Going to or near the residence, place of employment, or business of a member of the family or household or of the person protected under the order;
- g. Going to or near the residence, child care facility, or school where a child protected under the order resides or attends; and/or
- h. Possessing a firearm, unless the person is a peace officer, as defined by Section 1.07, Penal Code, actively engaged in employment as a sworn, full-time paid employee of a state agency or political subdivision.
- i. Tracking or monitoring personal property or a motor vehicle in the possession of the person protected under the order or of a member of the family or household of the person protected under the order, without the protected person's effective consent, including by:
 - (1) using a tracking application on a personal electronic device in the possession of the person or the family or household member or using a tracking device; or
 - (2) physically following the person or the family or household member or causing another to physically follow the person or member.

18. Sign the order.

- a. The order must contain the following statements printed in bold-faced type or in capital letters:

Art. 17.292, C.C.P.

A VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER BY COMMISSION OF AN ACT PROHIBITED BY THE ORDER MAY BE PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OF AS MUCH AS \$4,000 OR BY CONFINEMENT IN JAIL FOR AS LONG AS ONE YEAR OR BY BOTH. AN ACT THAT RESULTS IN OR A SEPARATE OFFENSE MAY BE PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE MISDEMEANOR OR FELONY OFFENSE, AS APPLICABLE, IN ADDITION TO A VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER. IF THE ACT IS PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE FELONY OFFENSE, IT IS PUNISHABLE BY CONFINEMENT IN PRISON FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS. THE POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A PERSON, OTHER THAN A PEACE OFFICER, AS DEFINED BY SECTION 1.07, PENAL CODE, ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN EMPLOYMENT AS A SWORN, FULL-TIME PAID EMPLOYEE OF A STATE AGENCY OR POLITICAL SUBDIVISION, WHO IS SUBJECT

TO THIS ORDER MAY BE PROSECUTED AS A SEPARATE OFFENSE PUNISHABLE BY CONFINEMENT OR IMPRISONMENT.

NO PERSON, INCLUDING A PERSON WHO IS PROTECTED BY THIS ORDER, MAY GIVETO ANYONE TO IGNORE OR ANY PROVISION OF THIS ORDER.THE TIME IN WHICH THIS ORDER IS, EVERY PROVISION OF THIS ORDER IS IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT UNLESS A COURT CHANGES THE ORDER.

- 19. Ensure that a copy of the order is served on the defendant in person or electronically and that he or she signs the acknowledgment.
- 20. File the original order and acknowledgment with the court clerk.

- ❑ 21. As soon as possible but not later than the next business day, transmit copies of the order to the Chief of Police where the member of the family or household or individual protected by the order resides, as well as a copy to the victim.

- ❑ 22. If the victim is not present at the time the order is issued, order an appropriate peace officer to make a good faith effort to notify the victim within 24 hours by calling the victim’s residence and place of employment.

- ❑ 23. The MOEP lasts no less than 61 days or more than 91 days unless the alleged offense involves the exhibition of a deadly weapon. Then the period shall last no less than 91 days or more than 121 days.

- ❑ 24. A MOEP may be transferred to the court with jurisdiction of the underlying criminal case:
 - ❑ a. On motion, notice, and hearing (serve all parties, including the State); or
 - ❑ b. On agreement of all parties.

- ❑ 25. The magistrate or the court to which a MOEP was transferred under Step 24 may modify all or part of the MOEP if:
 - ❑ a. Notice is made to each affected party of a hearing; and
 - ❑ b. The magistrate finds that:
 - ❑ (1) The order as originally issued is unworkable;
 - ❑ (2) The modification will not place the victim at greater risk than the original order; and

The copies of the order and any other information may be sent electronically or in another manner accessible by the recipient.
 Art. 17.292(h), C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Clerk’s Letter: Copy of Magistrate’s Order of Emergency Protection.

Art. 17.292(n), C.C.P.

Art. 17.292(j) and (n), C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Motion to Modify Magistrate’s Order of Emergency Protection.

Art. 17.292(j), C.C.P.

- (3) The modification will not in any way endanger a person protected under the order.
- 26. On request by a person protected by an order for emergency protection issued under Article 17.292, or if determined necessary by the magistrate, the court issuing the order may protect the person's mailing address by rendering an order:
 - a. requiring the person protected under the order to:
 - (1) disclose the person's mailing address to the court;
 - (2) designate another person to receive on behalf of the person any notice or documents filed with the court related to the order; and
 - (3) disclose the designated person's mailing address to the court;
 - b. requiring the court clerk to:
 - (1) strike the mailing address of the person protected by the order from the public records of the court, if applicable; and
 - (2) maintain a confidential record of the mailing address for use only by the court or a law enforcement agency for purposes of entering the information required into the statewide law enforcement information system maintained by the Department of Public Safety; and
 - c. prohibiting the release of the information to the defendant.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order Modifying Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection*.

Art. 17.294, C.C.P.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate's Order of Confidentiality of Certain Information in Order for Emergency Protection*.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

9. Appointment of Counsel – When the Right Attaches

Checklist 1-9	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The right to counsel “attaches” at magistration.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Article 26.04, C.C.P., controls appointment of counsel and requires the judges of the county courts, statutory county courts, and district courts trying criminal cases in each county to adopt and publish written countywide procedures for appointment of counsel.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Those judges acting as a body may designate someone to make the actual appointment under the guidelines and procedures they adopt. That could be a municipal judge.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The procedures adopted by the body of judges must include procedures, financial standards, and forms to determine indigence and whether counsel should be appointed.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Standards can include all of the defendant’s financial information including spousal income available to the defendant.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The designee appointing counsel cannot consider whether the defendant posted bail.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. If a municipal judge is made the designee of the district or county judges to appoint counsel, the municipal judge should review the local plan concerning the responsibility to notify counsel of assignment and the information that is required to be provided to the accused.</p>	<p><i>Rothgery v. Gillespie County</i>, 554 U.S. 191 (2008).</p> <p>See Checklist 1-1. It is rare that the municipal judge acting as a magistrate will be required to appoint counsel. This duty is normally the prerogative of the local administrative statutory county court judge and local administrative court judge.</p> <p>Consult your county’s indigent defense plan. A copy of your jurisdiction’s local indigent defense plan and guidelines is available online at: http://tidc.tamu.edu/public.net/Reports/IDPlanNarrative.aspx.</p>

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

10. Examining Trial

Checklist 1-10	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The defendant in any felony case is entitled to an examining trial prior to indictment to determine the truth of the accusation against the defendant or to review bail.</p>	Art. 16.01, C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. An examining trial may also be held upon the filing of an affidavit or sworn motion alleging that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) The amount of bail is insufficient;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) The sureties are not worth twice the amount of the bail; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The bail bond is defective.</p>	Art. 16.16, C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The right to an examining trial in a felony terminates upon the return of an indictment.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. There is no right to an examining trial in a misdemeanor.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The defendant may be either in custody or free on bail.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. The defendant must be allowed sufficient time prior to any hearing to obtain counsel.</p>	Art. 16.01, C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Appointment of counsel must be made pursuant to the procedures adopted by the local criminal courts. The magistrate should provide appropriate assistance to the defendant to obtain counsel through that system.</p>	Arts. 1.051 and 16.01, C.C.P. See Checklist 1-9.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. The Texas Rules of Evidence apply to the examining trial.</p>	Art. 16.07, C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. The defendant must be present at the examining trial. The State must be represented by the district attorney.</p>	Art. 16.08, C.C.P.

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|---|-------------------------------|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 9. The court may issue a subpoena, or an attachment without having first issued a subpoena, for any witness within the county.</p> | Art. 16.10, C.C.P. |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 10. An attachment for an out-of-county witness may be issued when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The party applying for the attachment swears in an affidavit that the testimony is material; and<input type="checkbox"/> b. The affidavit sets forth the facts expected to be proven by the witness.<input type="checkbox"/> c. If the court finds the facts set forth to be immaterial or the facts are admitted to be true by the adverse party, the attachment shall not issue. | Art. 16.11, C.C.P. |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. The proceeding must be transcribed by a court reporter. Alternatively a statement of facts, agreed to by the State and defense and approved by the presiding magistrate, may be used to preserve the testimony of the witnesses. The State or a defendant may preserve testimony for use in an examining trial by the taking of a deposition.</p> | Arts. 16.09 and 39.01, C.C.P. |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. Before beginning the hearing, inform the defendant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Of the right to make a statement relative to the accusation in the complaint;<input type="checkbox"/> b. That he or she may not be compelled to make any statement; and<input type="checkbox"/> c. That if he or she does make a statement, it may be used in evidence against him or her. | Art. 16.03, C.C.P. |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 13. If the defendant desires to make a statement he or she may only do so prior to the examination of any witnesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The statement must be reduced to writing, and<input type="checkbox"/> b. Signed, but not sworn to, by the defendant. | |

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- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. The magistrate shall then attest by his or her own certificate and signature to the execution and signing of the statement. | Art. 16.04, C.C.P. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Allow the prosecutor to question the State’s witnesses and the defense counsel to cross-examine them. | Art. 16.06, C.C.P. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. The court may question the witnesses if no prosecutor appears. | Art. 16.06, C.C.P. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17. The proceeding may not be continued unless: | Art. 16.14, C.C.P. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Either the defendant or the prosecutor signs a sworn statement setting forth the following: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) The name, address, and facts that either expect to prove with the testimony of the witness; or | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The nature of the evidence. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. The court is satisfied that the testimony or evidence is material, and the adverse party denies the truth. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18. At the conclusion of the proceeding, enter an order: | Art. 16.17, C.C.P. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Committing the defendant to jail; | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Discharging the defendant; or | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Admitting the defendant to bail. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Failure to enter an order within 48 hours after the proceeding has been completed operates as a finding of no probable cause and the defendant is discharged. | Art. 16.17, C.C.P. |

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

General Provisions Applicable to Adults

11. Examination of Defendant in Custody Suspected of Having Mental Illness or Intellectual Disability

Checklist 1-11	Script/Notes
Definitions:	
<p>“Mental illness” means an illness, disease, or condition, other than epilepsy, senility, alcoholism, or mental deficiency that: (a) substantially impairs a person’s thoughts, perceptions of reality, emotional process, or judgment; or (b) grossly impairs behavior as demonstrated by recent disturbed behavior.</p>	<p>Sec. 571.003(14), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Intellectual disability” means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning that is concurrent with deficit in adaptive behavior and originates during the developmental period.</p>	<p>Sec. 591.003(7-a), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Subaverage general intellectual functioning” refers to measured intelligence on standardized psychometric instruments of two or more standard deviations below the age-group mean for the tests used.</p>	<p>Sec. 591.003(20), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Department” means the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services.</p>	<p>Sec. 591.003(7), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Person with intellectual disability” means a person determined by a physician or psychologist licensed in this state or certified by the department to have subaverage general intellectual functioning with deficits in adaptive behavior.</p>	<p>Sec. 591.003(15-a), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Adaptive behavior” means how effectively individuals cope with common life demands and how well they meet the standards of personal independence expected of someone in their particular age group, sociocultural background, and community setting.</p>	<p>Sec. 591.003(1), H.S.C.</p>

- ❑ 1. The sheriff or municipal jailer has a duty to notify the judge that there may be reasonable cause to believe that a defendant committed to the sheriff's custody has a mental illness or is a person with an intellectual disability.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Sheriff's Notification – Sheriff's or Municipal Jailer's Notification – Person in Custody with Possible Mental Illness/Intellectual Disability. Sheriff or municipal jailer shall notify a magistrate within 12 hours after receiving evidence or a statement that may establish reasonable cause. Art. 16.22(a), C.C.P.

The notice must include any information related to the sheriff's or municipal jailer's determination, such as information regarding the defendant's behavior immediately before, during, and after the defendant's arrest and, if applicable, the results of any previous assessment of the defendant. Sec. 16.22(a)(1), C.C.P.

- ❑ 2. Determine if there is reasonable cause to believe (1) defendant has a mental illness, or (2) is a person with an intellectual disability, by considering:
 - ❑ a. The defendant's behavior; and
 - ❑ b. The result of a prior evaluation indicating a need for referral for further mental health or intellectual disability assessment.
- ❑ 3. Is there reasonable cause?
 - ❑ a. If the judge determines that there is no reasonable cause, no further action is required.

Art. 16.22(a)(1), C.C.P.

- b. If reasonable cause is determined, issue a written order that the defendant be interviewed.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate’s Order for Mental Illness/Intellectual Disability Exam*. The interview must be conducted by the service provider that contracts with the jail to provide mental health or intellectual and disability services, local mental health authority, local intellectual and developmental disability authority, or another qualified mental health or intellectual disability expert. Art. 16.22(a), C.C.P.

- c. A magistrate is not required to order an interview or other collection of information if the defendant is no longer in custody, if the defendant in the year preceding the defendant’s applicable date of arrest has been determined to have a mental illness or to be a person with an intellectual disability by the service provider that contracts with the jail to provide mental health or intellectual and disability services, local mental health authority, the local mental health authority, local intellectual and developmental disability authority, or another mental health or intellectual disability expert, or the defendant was only arrested or charged with an offense punishable as a Class C misdemeanor.

Art. 16.22(a)(2), C.C.P.

- d. An interview may be conducted in person in the jail, by telephone, or through a telemedicine medical service or telehealth service.

Art. 16.22(a-4), C.C.P.

- 4. From the time of the order, the expert designated by the judge must return a written report within 96 hours for a defendant held in custody or 30 days for a defendant released from custody.

Art. 16.22(b), C.C.P.

- a. The judge is required to give copies of the report to the prosecutor; the defense attorney; the trial court; the sheriff or other person responsible for the defendant’s medical records while the defendant is confined in county jail; and as applicable: any personal bond office established under Article 17.42 for the county in which the defendant is being confined; or the director of the office or department that is responsible for supervising the defendant while the defendant is released on bail and receiving mental health or intellectual and developmental disability services as a condition of bail.

- 5. What if the defendant fails or refuses to submit to an examination?
 - a. The judge may order the defendant to custody for examination for a period not to exceed 72 hours; but

 - b. The judge may not order a defendant to a facility operated by the State Health Services or the Department of Aging and Disability Services without the consent of the head of that facility.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order into Custody for Mental Illness/Intellectual Disability Exam; Warrant for Mental Health/Intellectual Disability Exam – Person Failing to Submit Voluntarily*. It is advisable to work within your community to establish procedures for in-detention examinations. If the defendant has been released from custody, the judge will need to know to which facility to commit the individual.

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

Property Hearings: Disposition of Stolen Property

12. Restoration When No Trial Pending

Chapter 47, C.C.P. governs the disposition of stolen property. Except in instances where a peace officer comes into property governed by the Texas Pawnshop Act (Chapter 371 of the Finance Code), an officer who comes into custody of property alleged to have been stolen must hold it if the property ownership is contested or disputed. Art. 47.01(a), C.C.P. If an officer comes into custody of property governed by the Texas Pawnshop Act, the property must be held regardless of whether the ownership of the property is contested or disputed. Art. 47.01(b), C.C.P. When an officer seizes allegedly stolen property, the officer is required to immediately file a schedule with the court having jurisdiction of the case describing the property seized and its estimated value. Art. 47.03, C.C.P. The schedule must certify both that the officer seized the property and the reason for the seizure. Furthermore, the officer is required to notify the court of the names and addresses of each party known to the officer who has a claim to possession of the seized property. The following checklists contemplate property hearings being conducted under one of two scenarios: (1) restoration when no trial is pending, or (2) restoration upon trial or pending trial.

Checklist 1-12	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Jurisdiction and Venue: Jurisdiction under this section is based solely on jurisdiction as a criminal magistrate and not as a court with civil jurisdiction. Jurisdiction and venue to hear a seizure case lies with any: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> a. District judge, county judge, or justice of the peace in the county where the property is held or in which the property was alleged to have been stolen; or <li> <input type="checkbox"/> b. Municipal judge in the municipality where the property is being held or in which the property was alleged to have been stolen. <li> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Change of Venue: A court may transfer venue to a court in another county on the motion of an interested party. 	<p>Art. 47.01a, C.C.P.</p> <p>This is one of the few instances remaining in Texas criminal procedure where the authority of the municipal judge as a magistrate is limited to the boundaries of the municipality.</p> <p>Art. 47.01a(d), C.C.P.</p>

- 3. Petition for Hearing Filed: If a criminal action involving the property in question is not pending, then any of the courts having jurisdiction may hold a hearing to determine the right to possession of the property, upon the petition of any interested party, including a county, a city, or the state.

Art. 47.01a(a), C.C.P. Note: A peace officer is an “interested party” since the evidence may establish that the State has a superior right to possession. A hearing may be held on the petition of a seizing officer. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice of Stolen Property Hearing*. The C.C.P. is silent as to the obligation of the Court to provide notice to interested parties. Nevertheless, due to the property interest at stake, due process interests, and a judge’s ethical adjudicative responsibilities (Canon 3B(8) *Code of Judicial Conduct*), interested parties should be given notice of the date and time of the hearing.

- 4. Notice Provided.

- 5. Conduct the Hearing.

See Checklist 1-14.

- 6. Post-Hearing Orders: After a hearing and appropriate findings, the court may enter the following orders:

- a. Order the property delivered to whoever has the superior right of possession:

Art. 47.01a(e). Note: The person with the superior right of possession is responsible for any transportation necessary for delivery.

- (1) Without conditions;

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate Duties: Order Restoring Stolen Property When No Trial is Pending*. Art. 47.01a(a)(1), C.C.P. Presumably, this is construed to mean that claimants are exempt from paying charges pursuant to Art. 47.07, C.C.P.

- (2) Subject to the condition that the property be made available to the State if needed in future prosecutions.

Art. 47.01a(a)(2), C.C.P. This requires a written motion by an attorney representing the State.

<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Order the property be awarded to the custody of a peace officer, pending resolution of the investigation involving the property.</p>	<p>Art. 47.01a(a)(3), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If it is shown in a hearing that probable cause exists to believe that the property was acquired by theft or by another manner that makes its acquisition an offense and that the identity of the actual owner of the property cannot be determined, the magistrate shall order the peace officer to:</p>	<p>Art. 47.01a(b), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Deliver the property to a government agency for official purposes;</p>	<p>Art. 47.01a(b)(1), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Deliver the property to a person authorized by Article 18.17, C.C.P., to receive and dispose of the property; or</p>	<p>Art. 47.01a(b)(2), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Destroy the property.</p>	<p>Art. 47.01a(b)(3), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. Appeals: Appeal from a hearing held in a municipal court or justice court under Article 47.01(a), C.C.P., shall be heard by a county court or a statutory county court. Such appeals are governed by the rules of procedure for appeals for civil cases from justice court to county court.</p>	<p>Art. 47.12(b), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The requirement that the notice of appeal be given at the conclusion of the hearing does not require that the notice be given in open court. The hearing does not conclude until the court’s ruling is both announced and received.</p>	<p><i>Phillips v. State</i>, 77 S.W.3d 465 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2002); <i>White v. State</i>, 930 S.W.2d 673 (Tex. App.—Waco 1996).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Only an “interested person” who appears at a hearing may appeal and must post an appeal bond by the end of the next business day.</p>	<p>Art. 47.12(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The court may require an appeal bond in the amount the court deems appropriate, but not more than twice the value of the property, made payable to the party awarded possession at the hearing, with sufficient sureties.</p>	<p>Art. 47.12(d), C.C.P.</p>

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

Property Hearings: Disposition of Stolen Property

13. Restoration upon Trial or Trial Pending

Checklist 1-13	Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Jurisdiction: Article 47.02, C.C.P., contemplates jurisdiction being:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. In a trial court, post-adjudication of a theft or illegal acquisition of property case;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. In a trial court in which a theft or other illegal acquisition of property case is pending; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. With any magistrate having jurisdiction in the county in which the property was alleged to have been stolen or, if the criminal action is pending in another county, the county in which the action is pending subject to Chapter 501, T.C. (The Texas Certificate of Title Act) and the consent of the prosecuting attorney.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Conduct the Hearing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Post Hearing Orders.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Upon Trial: The court trying the case shall order the property to be restored to a person appearing on presentation of proof to be the owner. The owner of the property is responsible for any transportation necessary to restore the property to the owner.</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">If the property is not claimed within 30 days of conviction of the person who illegally acquired it, the property shall be disposed of pursuant to Article 18.17, C.C.P.</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">The real owner of the property sold pursuant to Article 47.06 or 47.13, C.C.P. may recover such property under the terms prescribed in Article 18.17(e), C.C.P.</p>	<p>See Checklist 1-14.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order Restoring Stolen Property on Trial</i>.</p> <p>Art. 47.02, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 47.06, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 47.07, C.C.P.</p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Trial Pending: If it is proved to the satisfaction of the judge that the person is a true owner of the property alleged to be stolen and the property is in the possession of the peace officer, the peace officer by written order shall restore it to the owner.</p> | <p>Art. 47.02, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. When Doubt Remains: If the court has doubt as to the ownership of the property, the court may require:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A bond of the claimant for redelivery of the property should it be thereafter shown not to belong to the claimant; or</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) That the sheriff retains the property until further orders are made regarding possession.</p> | <p>Art. 47.05, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Claimant to Pay Charges: The claimant of the property must pay all reasonable charges for safekeeping prior to delivery of the property. The officer claiming that such charges are owed must verify such charges. If the charges are not paid, the property shall be sold as under execution and the proceeds of the sale, less the charges and cost of the sale, paid to the owner of the property.</p> | <p>The owner is responsible for any transportation necessary to return the property to the owner.
Art. 47.02(c), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Appeals: No appeals from hearings under Article 47.02, C.C.P., are authorized.</p> | <p>Presumably, efforts to appeal would be dependent on the outcome of the appeal of the theft or property acquisition matter.</p> |

CHAPTER 1 MAGISTRATE DUTIES

Property Hearings: Disposition of Stolen Property

14. Hearing

Checklist 1-14	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. The court shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Order the property delivered to whomever has the superior right to possession; and <input type="checkbox"/> b. Make such orders as the facts require. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. If none of the interested parties appear at the hearing after having been properly notified, the court may presume that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The parties do not have a valid claim to possession; <input type="checkbox"/> b. The parties have abandoned their claim to possession; or <input type="checkbox"/> c. They do not wish to assert a claim. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court may award possession of the property to the law enforcement agency if no interested party has proved a right to possess the property. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. If none of the interested parties appear at the hearing, except for the officer who has discovered another interested party since the scheduling of the hearing, the court should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Instruct the officer to file an amended inventory of property seized, and to include the name and mailing address of the newly-discovered interested party on the amended form; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Reset the case; and <input type="checkbox"/> c. Notify the interested parties of the hearing. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. When the true owner of a stolen motor vehicle is unknown and there are no lien holders to be found: 	<p>Art 47.01a(a)(1), C.C.P.</p>

- ❑ a. The officer should proceed to file a seizure case; and
 - ❑ b. The court should notify the respondent (the person from whom the vehicle was seized, if any), of the right to appear at the hearing and assert a claim of possession.

- ❑ 6. Order of Proceedings: The hearing should be conducted in an orderly manner to ensure that parties are given an opportunity to be heard. This may be accomplished through a question and answer format facilitated by the judge.

- ❑ 7. Burden of Proof: In contrast to criminal cases in which the State’s case must be proven “beyond a reasonable doubt,” a respondent or petitioner must establish a claim to the property by a “preponderance of the evidence.”
 - ❑ a. If there are no other interested parties present who might rebut the respondent’s or petitioner’s evidence, the right to possession is established.

- ❑ 8. Rules of Evidence: In hearings conducted when no trial is pending, hearsay evidence is admissible.

- ❑ 9. Proceed to enter Post-Hearing Orders.

Though the C.C.P. is silent as to this issue, Canon 3B8, *Code of Judicial Conduct*, would nonetheless apply.

“Preponderance of the evidence” means the greater weight and degree of credible evidence. *Upjohn Co. v. Freeman*, 847 S.W.2d 589 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1992, no writ).

At the hearing, any interested person may present evidence that the property was not acquired by theft or another offense or that the person is entitled to possess the property.

Art. 47.01a(c), C.C.P. Article 47.02, C.C.P., does not address the admissibility of hearsay statements upon trial or when trial is pending.

See Checklists 1-12 and 1-13 for more information on Post-Hearing Orders.

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

1. The Chapter 15 Arrest Warrant

Warrants, in contrast to other writs such as the *capias* and *capias pro fine*, are issued primarily by judges in their capacity as magistrates. As a magistrate, a municipal judge has authority to issue warrants of arrest for offenses including those that are outside of the municipal court’s jurisdiction, such as Class A and B misdemeanors and felonies. For those offenses, a magistrate’s authority for issuing arrest warrants is found in Chapter 15, C.C.P. Article 2.09, C.C.P. lists those persons who are magistrates in Texas. Included in that list are municipal judges. A magistrate’s authority is countywide. *Gilbert v. State*, 493 S.W.2d 783 (Tex. Crim. App. 1973) and *Ex parte Clear*, 573 S.W.2d. 224 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978). A magistrate’s authority to issue warrants is discussed in Checklist 2-1.

Checklist 2-1	Script/Notes
<p>A “warrant of arrest” is a written order from a magistrate directed to a peace officer commanding the officer to take the body of the person accused of an offense to be dealt with according to law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. No arrest warrant shall issue without probable cause supported by oath or affirmation. An arrest warrant may be issued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. When a verbal order of arrest is proper; <input type="checkbox"/> b. When a person swears under oath that another has committed an offense against the laws of the State; or <input type="checkbox"/> c. In any case in which the C.C.P. permits the issuance of an arrest warrant. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. The arrest warrant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Issues in the name of “The State of Texas;” 	<p>Art. 15.01, C.C.P. See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 1.</p> <p>Art. 1.06, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 15.03(a)(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 15.03(a)(2), C.C.P. A person may appear before the magistrate in person or they may be presented to the magistrate through an electronic broadcast system. Art. 15.03(c), C.C.P. A recording of the communication must be made and preserved, if the defendant is charged with the offense, until the defendant is acquitted or all appeals have been exhausted. Art. 15.03(d), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 15.03(a)(3), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 15.02, C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Warrant of Arrest: Magistrate.</p>

- b. Names the person to be arrested, if known, or reasonably describes the person to be arrested, including any or all of the following:
 - (1) Nickname or “street” name;
 - (2) Age;
 - (3) Gender;
 - (4) Height and weight;
 - (5) Identifying marks; and
 - (6) Ethnic origin.
 - c. Alleges the commission of some offense against the laws of the State;
 - d. Is signed by a magistrate with his or her office named in the body of the warrant or in connection with the officer’s signature; and
 - e. Includes the magistrate’s name in legible handwriting, legible typewritten form, or legible stamp print.
3. An arrest warrant must also be supported by an affidavit of probable cause stating:
- a. The name of the accused, if known, and if not known, a reasonably definite description;
 - b. The time and place of the commission of the offense, as definitely as can be stated by the affiant; and
 - c. Sufficient facts to support a finding of probable cause that the person named therein:
 - (1) Committed the offense charged; and

Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.

Arts. 15.04 and 15.05, C.C.P., Art. 1.06, C.C.P.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Committed it within the period covered by the statute of limitations.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. The specific requisites of the complaint or affidavit are covered later in this chapter.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. An arrest warrant is valid throughout Texas, unless issued by a city mayor.
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Make sure a copy of any warrant or affidavit is provided to the clerk of the court for public disclosure once executed. | <p>See Checklist 2-4.</p> <p>Art. 15.06, C.C.P.
A warrant issued by a mayor is generally only valid in the county in which it is issued. Art. 15.07, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 15.26, C.C.P.
See Checklist 2-12.</p> |
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A <i>capias</i> may be issued by the court in misdemeanor cases upon the filing of an information or complaint.</p>	<p>A <i>capias</i> may issue only after a judge’s determination of probable cause. Art. 23.04, C.C.P.; <i>Sharp v. State</i>, 677 S.W.2d 513 (Tex. Crim. App. 1984).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A <i>capias</i> may be issued in electronic form for a person’s failure to appear before a court or to comply with a court order.</p>	<p>Art. 23.031, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. A <i>capias</i> shall be issued when a bail forfeiture is declared.</p>	<p>Art. 23.05, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> e. Make sure copies of all <i>capiases</i> and affidavits are provided to the clerk of the court for public disclosure once executed.</p>	<p>Art. 15.26, C.C.P. See Checklist 2-12.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A “<i>capias</i>” as defined in Chapter 43 is a writ that is: (1) issued by a court having jurisdiction of a case after judgment and sentence; and (2) directed to any peace officer of the State of Texas commanding the officer to arrest a person convicted of an offense and bring the arrested person before that court immediately or on a day or at a term stated in the writ.</p>	<p>Art. 43.015(1), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The court may issue a <i>capias</i>, as defined in Chapter 43, when a judgment and sentence have been rendered against a defendant and the defendant is absent.</p>	<p>Art. 43.04, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A <i>capias</i>, issued pursuant to Chapter 43, may be issued in electronic form.</p>	<p>Art. 43.021, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A <i>capias</i> may be issued to any county in the State and shall be executed as in other cases, but no bail shall be taken.</p>	<p>Art. 43.06, C.C.P.</p>

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

3. The Chapter 45A Arrest Warrant

Warrants, in contrast to other writs such as the *capias* and *capias pro fine*, are issued primarily by judges in their capacity as magistrates. There is one notable exception to this rule in Texas: municipal judges and justices of the peace have authority to issue arrest warrants for fine-only misdemeanors filed in their court pursuant to Art. 45A.104, C.C.P. This Chapter 45A warrant is in many ways more similar to a *capias* than an arrest warrant, as it is issued by a judge as opposed to a magistrate and is often issued after the judge has jurisdiction over the offense due to the filing of the sworn complaint. It may also be issued by the judge after an affidavit establishing probable cause, but prior to formal charging, much like the Chapter 15 arrest warrant.

The 85th Regular Legislature made significant changes relating to the Article 45A.104 warrant. The issuance of an arrest warrant is prohibited for the defendant's failure to appear at the initial court setting, including failure to appear as required by a citation issued under Article 14.06(b) unless certain additional notice is provided by telephone or regular mail. Furthermore, judges are required to recall an arrest warrant for the defendant's failure to appear if, before the arrest warrant is executed, the defendant voluntarily appears to resolve the arrest warrant and the arrest warrant is resolved in any manner authorized by the Code of Criminal Procedure; this is commonly referred to as the "safe harbor" provision.

Checklist 2-3	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Prior to issuing an arrest warrant for the defendant's failure to appear at the initial court setting, including failure to appear as required by a citation issued under Article 14.06(b), C.C.P., the judge must provide by telephone or regular mail to the defendant notice that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <input type="checkbox"/> a. A date and time, occurring within the 30-day period following the date that notice is provided, when the defendant must appear before the justice or judge; <li> <input type="checkbox"/> b. The name and address of the court with jurisdiction in the case; <li> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Information regarding alternatives to the full payment of any fine or costs owed by the defendant, if the defendant is unable to pay that amount; 	<p>Art. 45A.104(e), C.C.P.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice Initial Court Setting</i>.</p> <p>A court may send any notice using mail or electronic mail. Sec. 80.002(a), G.C.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. A statement that the defendant may be entitled to a credit toward any fine or costs owed by the defendant if the defendant was confined in jail or prison after the commission of the offense for which the notice is given; and <input type="checkbox"/> e. An explanation of the consequences if the defendant fails to appear before the justice or judge as required by this article. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. The defendant must fail to appear before the justice or judge as required by this article. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. A defendant who receives notice may request an alternative date or time to appear before the judge if the defendant is unable to appear on the date and time included in the notice. | <p>Art. 45A.104(f), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. A judge may issue a warrant for the arrest of the accused and deliver the same to the proper officer to be executed when a sworn complaint or affidavit based on probable cause has been filed before the municipal court | <p>Art. 45A.104(a), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. The arrest warrant is sufficient if it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Issues in the name of “The State of Texas;” <input type="checkbox"/> b. Is directed to the proper peace officer or some other person specifically named in the warrant; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Includes a command that the body of the accused be taken, and brought before the authority issuing the warrant, at the time and place stated in the warrant; <input type="checkbox"/> d. States the name of the person whose arrest is ordered, if known, or if not known, it describes the person as in the complaint; <input type="checkbox"/> e. States that the person is accused of some offense against the laws of this state, naming the offense; and | <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Warrant of Arrest: Judge.</i></p> <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(3), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(4), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(5), C.C.P.</p> |

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> f. Is signed by the judge, naming the office of the justice or judge in the body of the warrant or in connection with the signature of the justice or judge.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.104(b)(6), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Chapter 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure applies to a warrant of arrest issued under this article, except as inconsistent or in conflict with this chapter.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.104(c), C.C.P.
See Checklist 2-1.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. In a county with a population of more than 2.5 million that does not have a county attorney, a judge may not issue a warrant under this section for the offense of Issuance of Bad Check under Section 32.41, P.C., unless the district attorney has approved the complaint or affidavit on which the warrant is based.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.104(d), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. A justice or judge shall recall an arrest warrant for the defendant's failure to appear if the defendant voluntarily appears and makes a good faith effort to resolve the arrest warrant before the warrant is executed.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.104(g), C.C.P.</p> |

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

4. Search Warrants for Persons and Property

A municipal judge, signing a search warrant in his or her capacity as a magistrate, must have geographical authority over the area to be searched (i.e., the county or counties in which the city is located). For example, an Austin municipal judge lacks the authority to issue a search warrant for property located in the City of El Paso. All magistrates have co-equal jurisdiction with all other magistrates within the county or counties in which their city is situated and their jurisdiction is coextensive with the limits of the county or counties. *Gilbert v. State*, 493 S.W.2d 783 (Tex. Crim. App. 1973) and *Ex parte Clear*, 573 S.W.2d. 224 (Tex.Crim. App. 1978).

Checklist 2-4	Script/Notes
<p>A “search warrant” is a written order from a magistrate to a peace officer commanding the officer to search for and to seize designated property or things and to return them to the magistrate.</p>	Art. 18.01(a), C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Review the search warrant, being certain it:</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Issues in the name of “The State of Texas;” and</p>	Art. 18.04(1), C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Directs any peace officer of the county to search the person, place, or thing named, and seize one or more of the following:</p>	Art. 18.04(3), C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Property acquired by theft or by any manner that makes its acquisition a penal offense;</p>	Art. 18.02, C.C.P.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Property specially designed, made, or adapted for or commonly used in the commission of an offense;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Arms or munitions kept or prepared for purposes of insurrection or riot;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Weapons prohibited by the Penal Code;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (5) Gambling devices or equipment, altered gambling equipment, or gambling paraphernalia;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (6) Obscene materials kept or prepared for commercial distribution or exhibition;</p>	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (7) A drug, controlled substance, immediate precursor, chemical precursor, or other controlled substance property, including an apparatus or paraphernalia kept, prepared, or manufactured in violation of the laws of this state; <input type="checkbox"/> (8) Any property whose possession is prohibited by law; <input type="checkbox"/> (9) Implements or instruments used in commission of a crime; <input type="checkbox"/> (10) Property or items, except the personal writings by the accused, constituting evidence of an offense or constituting evidence tending to show that a particular person(s) committed an offense; <input type="checkbox"/> (11) Persons; <input type="checkbox"/> (12) Contraband subject to forfeiture under Chapter 59, C.C.P.; <input type="checkbox"/> (13) Electronic customer data held in electronic storage; or <input type="checkbox"/> (14) A cellular telephone or other wireless communication device. | <p>See Checklist 2-6 for special rules concerning “evidentiary” warrants for mere evidence.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Identifies the property to be seized with particularity; | <p>A warrant for electronic customer data can only be issued by a district judge. Art. 18B.353, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.04(2), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Identifies the location or property sought, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) A specific street address; and | <p>Art. 18.04(2), C.C.P.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (2) A full description of the building and surrounding areas. If no address is provided, this description should be detailed enough to distinguish the property to be searched. In cases of a multiple unit structure, such as apartment complexes, condominiums, and storage facilities, identify the specific unit to be searched. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. Describes the person, place, or thing to be searched, including any or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Proper name, nickname, or street name; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Age; <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Gender; <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Height and weight; <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Identifying marks; or <input type="checkbox"/> (6) Ethnic origin. | <p>Art. 18.04(2), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Date and sign the warrant. | <p>Art. 18.04(4), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Ensure that your name is included in clearly legible handwriting or in typewritten form along with your signature. | <p>Arts.18.04(5); 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Record the date and hour the warrant is signed on the face of the warrant. | <p>Art. 18.07(b), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. If the facts presented for the issuance of a search warrant also establish probable cause that a person has committed an offense, the search warrant may also order the arrest of that person. | <p>This is a “combination” search and arrest warrant. Art. 18.03, C.C.P.; see <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Search and Arrest Warrant</i>.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. With the exception of affidavits for search warrants that have been temporarily sealed, make sure a copy of all warrants and affidavits are provided to the clerk of the court for public disclosure, when executed. | <p>Art. 15.26, C.C.P.
 Art. 18.01(b), C.C.P.
 Art. 18.011, C.C.P.
 See Checklist 2-12.</p> |

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

5. The Affidavit Supporting the Arrest Warrant, Capias, or Search Warrant

Checklist 2-5	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The affidavit must establish a substantial basis for concluding that there is a “fair probability” that a search will uncover evidence of wrongdoing or that a person has committed an offense.</p>	<p><i>Illinois v. Gates</i>, 462 U.S. 213 (1983).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The affidavit must contain facts, not mere conclusions, from which the magistrate can make an independent determination of probable cause.</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(b), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Affidavit for Probable Cause for Arrest Warrant</i>.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The determination is based on the totality of the circumstances, practicality, and common sense.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Probable cause is a level of certainty more than mere suspicion but less than a preponderance; it is not a more-likely-than-not standard.</p>	<p>See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System: Chapter 1</i>.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Any reliable evidence may be considered without regard to its admissibility at trial; hearsay and police records may be considered.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Do not consider any information not in the warrant affidavit.</p>	<p>The four-corners doctrine limits the determination of sufficient probable cause to the four corners of the affidavit. <i>Lagrone v. State</i>, 742 S.W.2d 659 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987); <i>Adkins v. State</i>, 717 S.W.2d 363 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the applicant for a warrant has additional information, have that information included in an affidavit that is attached to the warrant.</p>	<p>While the four-corners rule has been consistently applied to search warrants, its application to arrest warrants is less strict, especially with recent changes in the law allowing an oath to be made before a magistrate electronically. See “Rounding the Corners: Criminal Application of the Four-Corners Rule,” <i>The Recorder</i> (June 2012).</p>

- b. For search warrants submitted by electronic means, the magistrate may consider additional testimony or exhibits.

- 5. Determine whether the source of the information in the affidavit is reliable.
 - a. The affiant is presumed to be honest (because of the oath).
 - b. A named victim, eyewitness, or citizen informant who reports a crime is presumed reliable.
 - c. An unnamed informant’s reliability may be shown by:
 - (1) Recitation of lack of criminal record, good reputation in the community for general veracity, and gainful employment;
 - (2) Corroboration of details provided by the informant;
 - (3) Recitation that informant has provided true, correct, and reliable information in the past; or
 - (4) Declaration by informant against penal interest.

- 6. Determine the basis of the source’s knowledge and whether the information from the source is credible.
 - a. Is the information first-hand and the result of direct observation of the facts rather than an opinion or a conclusion?
 - b. Is the information hearsay and, if so, is there an indication of its reliability?
 - c. Is the information corroborated by other sources or independent investigation?

Magistrates who consider additional information will have additional responsibilities under Art. 18.01(b-1), C.C.P. See Checklist 2-10.

Wetherby v. State, 482 S.W.2d 852 (Tex. Crim. App. 1972).

- d. Are there details not commonly known that suggest inside information by the informant?
- e. In the case of a search warrant, does it state the time when the information was acquired?

- 7. The search warrant affidavit is generally public information after the warrant is executed and should be made available for public inspection.
- 8. Make sure a copy of all warrants and affidavits are provided to the clerk of the court for public disclosure.

Schmidt v. State, 659 S.W.2d 420 (Tex. Crim. App. 1983). Stale information will not support a conclusion that property is still on the premises to be searched.

Art. 18.01(b), C.C.P.
See Checklist 2-12.

Art. 15.26, C.C.P.
See Checklist 2-12.

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

6. Search Warrants for Mere Evidence

Checklist 2-6	Script/Notes
<p>A “mere evidence” or evidentiary search warrant is an order from the magistrate to a peace officer to search for and seize property or items, except the personal writings of an accused, that constitute evidence of an offense or tend to show a particular person committed an offense.</p>	<p>Art. 18.02(a)(10), C.C.P. A blood warrant is an example of a “mere evidence” search warrant. See Checklist 2-7.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. An original mere evidence warrant may be issued by a judge of a municipal court of record or a county court judge who is a licensed attorney; a judge of a statutory county court, a district court, the Court of Criminal Appeals, or the Supreme Court of Texas; or a magistrate with jurisdiction over criminal cases serving a district court.</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Except under the limited circumstances noted below, neither a judge of a non-record municipal court nor a justice of the peace may issue a mere evidence warrant. The exception is for counties that do not have: (1) a judge of a municipal court of record who is a licensed attorney; (2) a county judge who is a licensed attorney; or (3) a statutory county court judge.</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(i), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Any subsequent mere evidence warrant to search the same person, place, or thing subjected to a prior search under a mere evidence warrant may be issued only by a judge of a district court, a court of appeals, the Court of Criminal Appeals, or the Supreme Court.</p>	<p>Even municipal courts of record cannot issue a second mere evidence warrant. Art. 18.01(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Greater specificity is required in the affidavit for an evidentiary warrant than for a regular search warrant.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The affidavit must contain facts to establish probable cause that:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A specific offense was committed;</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>See Checklist 2-5 on probable cause.</p>

- (2) Specifically described property or items to be searched for and seized constitute evidence of the specific offense or that a particular person committed it; and
 - (3) The property or items constituting evidence are located at or on the particular person, place, or thing to be searched.
5. A warrant to search for “mere evidence” — as opposed to items in Article 18.02(a)(1-9) — may not be issued for the office of a:
- a. Newspaper;
 - b. News magazine; or
 - c. Television or radio station.
6. The warrant must include, with the magistrate’s signature, the magistrate’s name in legible handwriting, typewritten form, or stamp print.

Art. 18.01(e), C.C.P.

Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

7. Blood Search Warrants

Checklist 2-7	Script/Notes
<p>A blood search warrant is an order from the magistrate to a peace officer to seize a sample of a person’s blood.</p>	<p>Arts. 18.01(j) and 18.02(a)(10), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A blood search warrant may be issued by any magistrate who is a licensed attorney if:</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(j), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Blood Search Warrant.</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The suspect refuses to submit to a breath or blood alcohol test; and</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Is charged with:</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Driving While Intoxicated;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.04, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Driving While Intoxicated with a Child Passenger;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.045, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Flying While Intoxicated;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.05, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Boating While Intoxicated;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.06, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (5) Boating While Intoxicated with Child Passenger;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.061, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (6) Assembling or Operating an Amusement Ride While Intoxicated;</p>	<p>Sec. 49.065, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (7) Intoxication Assault; or</p>	<p>Sec. 49.07, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (8) Intoxication Manslaughter.</p>	<p>Sec. 49.08, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Greater specificity is required in the affidavit for an evidentiary warrant than for a regular search warrant.</p>	<p>Art. 18.01(c), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Affidavit for Blood Search Warrant.</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The affidavit must contain facts to establish probable cause that:</p>	<p>See Checklist 2-5 on probable cause.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A specific offense was committed;</p>	

- (2) Specifically described property or items to be searched for and seized constitute evidence of the specific offense or that a particular person committed it; and
 - (3) The property or items constituting evidence are located at or on the particular person, place, or thing to be searched.
- 3. A warrant issued under Art. 18.10(a)(10) to collect a blood specimen may be executed in any county adjacent to the county in which the warrant was issued and by any law enforcement officer in the county of execution. The specimen may be removed from the county in which it was seized and returned to the county in which the warrant issued without a court order.
- 4. A blood search warrant is not necessary for police to obtain a blood sample if the suspect voluntarily agrees to submit to the blood draw.
- 5. A peace officer is mandated to obtain a blood sample if:
 - a. the officer arrests the person for a motor or watercraft intoxication offense;
 - b. the person refuses the officer's request to submit to the taking of a blood sample voluntarily;
 - c. the person was the operator of a motor vehicle or watercraft involved in a collision that the officer reasonably believes occurred as a result of the offense; and
 - d. at the time of the arrest, the officer reasonably believes that as a direct result of the collision any individual has died, will die, or has suffered serious bodily injury.

Arts. 18.067 and 18.10(b), C.C.P.

- 6. Subject to Sec. 724.012(a-1), T.C., a police officer is mandated to obtain a breath or blood sample where a person has been arrested for a motor or watercraft intoxication offense, the person refuses the officer's request to submit to the taking of a specimen voluntarily, and
 - a. The person was the operator of a motor vehicle or a watercraft involved in a collision that the officer reasonably believes occurred as a result of the offense and, at the time of the arrest, the officer reasonably believes that as a direct result of the collision, an individual other than the person has suffered bodily injury and been transported to a hospital or other medical facility for treatment;
 - b. The offense for which the person was arrested is Driving While Intoxicated with Child Passenger or Boating While Intoxicated with Child Passenger; or
 - c. At the time of the arrest, the officer possesses or receives reliable information from a credible source that the person:
 - (1) Has been previously convicted of or placed on community supervision for Driving While Intoxicated with Child Passenger, Boating While Intoxicated with Child Passenger, Intoxication Assault, Intoxication Manslaughter, or an offense under the laws of another state containin elements substantially similar to those; or
 - (2) On two or more occasions, has been preciously convicted of or placed on community supervision for Driving While Intoxicated, Flying While Intoxicated, Boating While Intoxicated, or Assembling or Operating an Amusement Ride While Intoxicated

Sec. 724.012(b), T.C.

- d. A peace officer may not require the taking of a specimen under Section 724.012, T.C. unless the officer:
 - (1) obtains a warrant directing that the specimen be taken; or
 - (1) has probable cause to believe that exigent circumstances exist.
- e. The warrant must include, with the magistrate's signature, the magistrate's name in legible handwriting, typewritten form, or stamp print.

Sec. 724.012(e), T.C.

Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

8. Search Warrants to Photograph a Child. Art. 18.021, C.C.P.

Checklist 2-8	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The affidavit must contain the following information in addition to that normally required:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The allegation of one of the following specific offenses:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Injury to a child;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Sexual assault of a child;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Aggravated sexual assault of a child; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Continuous sexual abuse of young child or children.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The name or a description of the victim;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. A statement that evidence of the offense or evidence that a particular person committed the offense can be detected by photographing the child; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. A statement that the child to be located and photographed can be found at a particular place to be searched.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Special conditions for the execution of the warrant are also found in Article 18.021, C.C.P.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The return on the warrant shall include the exposed film.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The warrant must include, with the magistrate’s signature, the magistrate’s name in legible handwriting, typewritten form, or stamp print.</p>	<p>Sec. 22.04, P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 22.011(a), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 22.021, P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 21.02, P.C.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(f), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.021(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.021(d), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.</p>

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

9. Administrative Search Warrants. Art. 18.05, C.C.P.

In *Camara v. Municipal Court of the City and County of San Francisco*, 387 U.S. 523 (1967), the U.S. Supreme Court held that administrative searches trigger Fourth Amendment interests because submitting or refusing to submit may result in criminal prosecution. The Court also held that probable cause is required for issuance of a warrant for an administrative search, but the standard is lower than for issuance of a search warrant for fruits or instrumentalities of crime. In issuing administrative search warrants, magistrates should distinguish their function from that of issuing a search warrant. Administrative search warrants are for the inspection of premises, not the seizure of items. Administrative search warrants relate to preliminary inspection powers and should not be confused with the power of municipal courts to issue destruction orders to enforce provisions of Chapter 214, L.G.C., and Chapter 683, T.C. See Sec. 30.00005, G.C.

Checklist 2-9	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. An administrative search warrant may be issued to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Fire marshal; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Health officer; or <input type="checkbox"/> c. Code enforcement official <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. For the inspection of any specified premises to determine the presence of a(n):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Fire hazard; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Health hazard; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Unsafe building condition; or <input type="checkbox"/> d. Violation of any: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Fire, health, or building regulation; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Statute; or <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Ordinance. 	<p>Art. 18.05(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>Such officials may be of the state or of any county, city, or other political subdivision.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Search Warrant for Fire, Health, and Code Inspections.</i></p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Determine whether the city, county, or political subdivision designates specific officer(s) under Art. 18.05(d) to execute administrative search warrants and issue the warrant accordingly.</p> | <p>Art. 18.05(d), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. A warrant may not be issued under Article 18.05, C.C.P., to a code enforcement official of a county with a population of 3.3 million or more for the purpose of allowing the inspection of specified premises to determine the presence of an unsafe building condition or a violation of a building regulation, statute, or ordinance.</p> | <p>Art. 18.05(e), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. The affidavit must demonstrate probable cause to believe that the specifically named violation or hazardous condition is present in the premises to be inspected.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. The magistrate may consider the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Specific knowledge of the affiant; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Age and general condition of the premises; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Previous violations or hazards found present in the premises; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Type of premises; <input type="checkbox"/> e. Purposes for which the premises are used; and <input type="checkbox"/> f. Presence of hazards or violations in, and the general condition of premises near, the premises sought to be inspected. | <p>Art. 18.05(c), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. The warrant must include, with the magistrate’s signature, the magistrate’s name in legible handwriting, typewritten form, or stamp print.</p> | <p>Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.</p> |

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

10. Search Warrants and Affidavits Submitted by Reliable Electronic Means

In *Clay v. State*, 391 S.W.3d 94 (Tex. Crim. App. 2013), the Court held, in light of the specific facts of the case, that the telephonic administration of an oath for a search warrant did not run afoul of Article 18.01. Judge Meyers, dissenting, stated that only the Legislature could expand the statute. See “Case Law and Attorney General Opinion Update” *The Recorder* (November 2013). It appears that the Legislature valued Judge Meyers’ dissent. During the 84th Legislature, subsection (b-1) was added to Article 18.01 of the Code of Criminal Procedure authorizing communication of information supporting the issuance of a search warrant by telephone or any other reliable electronic means. Additionally, a magistrate may examine, under oath, an applicant or another person on whose testimony the application is based.

Checklist 2-10	Script/Notes
<p>If a search warrant as submitted fails to establish probable cause, information communicated by telephone or other reliable electronic means may be considered by the magistrate in determining whether to issue a search warrant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the applicant, and any person on whose testimony the application is based, is available to testify regarding additional facts, the magistrate may examine the person(s). If the magistrate chooses to do so, the magistrate shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Place the applicant, or person on whose testimony the application is based, under oath; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Acknowledge any attestation in writing on the affidavit if the applicant, or person on whose testimony the application is based, attests to the contents of the affidavit; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Ensure that any testimony is recorded verbatim by an electronic recording device, by a court reporter, or in writing; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Ensure that any electronic recording, court reporter’s notes, exhibits and any other written record are transcribed, certified as accurate and properly preserved; and <input type="checkbox"/> e. Sign, certify the accuracy of, and preserve any other record; and ensure that the exhibits are preserved. 	<p>Considering additional information using Art. 18.01(b-1), C.C.P., is not required under the law. Alternately, the magistrate may simply deny the issuance of the warrant.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(2)(A), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(2)(B), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(2)(D), C.C.P.</p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The applicant for a search warrant for which additional information is being considered, shall:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Prepare a proposed duplicate original of the warrant; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Read or transmit the contents of the duplicate original warrant verbatim to the magistrate.</p> | <p>Art. 18.01 (b-1)(3), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The magistrate must ensure that the contents of a proposed duplicate original warrant as read or otherwise transmitted verbatim to the magistrate are entered into an original warrant, which then may serve as the original search warrant.</p> | <p>Art. 18.01 (b-1)(3), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. A magistrate that modifies a warrant for which information is provided under Art. 18.01(b-1) shall:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Transmit the modified version of the warrant to the applicant by reliable electronic means; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. File the modified original and direct the applicant to modify the proposed duplicate original accordingly.</p> | <p>Art. 18.01 (b-1)(4), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. The magistrate who issues a warrant for which information is provided under Art. 18.01(b-1) shall:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Sign the original documents and legibly print the magistrate’s name;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Enter the date and time of issuance on the warrant; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Transmit the warrant by reliable electronic means to the applicant or direct the applicant to sign and legibly print the magistrate’s name and enter the date and time on the duplicate original.</p> | <p>Art. 18.01 (b-1)(5), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 2A.1521(a), C.C.P..</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Evidence obtained pursuant to a search warrant for which information was provided in accordance with Section 18.01(b-1) is not subject to suppression on the ground that issuing the warrant in compliance with this subsection was unreasonable under the circumstances, absent a finding of bad faith.</p> | <p>Art. 18.01(b-1)(6), C.C.P.</p> |

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

11. Search Warrant Return and the Immediate Disposition of Seized Property

Checklist 2-11	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Review the search warrant returned and determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. If the warrant was executed; <input type="checkbox"/> b. The manner of execution; and <input type="checkbox"/> c. If any articles were seized. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Enter an order directing where and with whom the seized property will be kept for safekeeping.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Hold a hearing on any questions arising from the execution of the search warrant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Discharge the defendant and release the property if good grounds for the issuance of the warrant are not shown. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Retain any criminal instruments seized and order them to be held by the sheriff subject to a subsequent order as provided by Articles 18.17, 18.18, and 18.19, C.C.P., or Chapter 59, C.C.P. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The property seized generally may not be removed from the county without an order approving the removal signed by a magistrate in the county in which the warrant was issued.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. File the search warrant with the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Send a record of any proceedings to the court of jurisdiction. 	<p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order Directing Safe Keeping of Property Taken Under a Search Warrant</i>. Art 18.10, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.12, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.13, C.C.P. This provision presumably applies only if the defendant is also arrested, perhaps under a combination arrest/search warrant.</p> <p>Art. 18.10, C.C.P. Note that a blood specimen taken under Art. 18.067, C.C.P. may be removed from the county in which it was seized and returned to the county in which the warrant was issued without a court order. Art. 18.10(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 18.15, C.C.P.</p>

- b. Retain a copy of all search warrants, affidavits, returns, and related documents.
- 6. Make sure a copy of all warrants and affidavits are provided to the clerk of the court for public disclosure.

Art. 15.26, C.C.P.
See Checklist 2-12.

- ❑ 6. An attorney representing the State in the prosecution of felonies may request a district judge or the judge of an appellate court to temporarily seal an affidavit presented under Article 18.01(b), C.C.P.
 - ❑ a. A district or appellate judge may seal the affidavit if the prosecuting attorney establishes a compelling state interest that either: (1) public disclosure of the affidavit would jeopardize the safety of a victim, witness, or confidential informant or cause the destruction of evidence; or (2) the affidavit contains information obtained from a court-ordered wiretap that has not expired at the time the attorney representing the State requests the sealing of the affidavit.
 - ❑ b. The order may not prohibit the disclosure of information relating to the contents of a search warrant, return of a search warrant, or inventory of the property taken pursuant to a search warrant, or affect the right of the defendant to discover the contents of an affidavit. When the order expires, the affidavit must be unsealed.

Art. 18.01(b), C.C.P.
Art. 18.011, C.C.P.

Art. 18.011(a), C.C.P.

Art. 18.011(d), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 2 SEARCH AND ARREST WARRANTS

13. The Capias Pro Fine

A capias pro fine is a post-judgment enforcement mechanism for unpaid fines and/or court costs. Article 45A.259 of the Code of Criminal Procedure requires judges to hold a show cause hearing to determine whether the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant prior to issuing a capias pro fine. A court has discretion when making a determination of undue hardship, but Article 45A.257 provides a list of criteria that courts are authorized to consider. Additionally, a court must recall a capias pro fine if, before the capias pro fine is executed, (1) the defendant provides notice to the justice or judge that they have difficulty paying in compliance with the judgment and a hearing is set, or (2) the defendant voluntarily appears and makes a good faith effort to resolve the capias pro fine.

The issuance of a capias pro fine authorizes an arrest, but it is neither an arrest warrant (see Checklist 2-1), nor is it a capias (see Checklist 2-2). Remember that converting a fine and/or court costs to a term of confinement when a defendant is unable to pay violates the defendant’s constitutional rights. The 14th Amendment requires that defendants accused of fine-only offenses be provided “alternative means” of discharging the judgment to avoid incarceration (via time-payment plans or discharge through community service.) *Tate v. Short*, 401 U.S. 395 (1971). See “Pay or Lay: *Tate v. Short* Revisited,” *The Recorder* (March 2003).

Checklist 2-13	Script/Notes
<p>A capias pro fine is a writ: (1) issued by a court having jurisdiction of a case after judgment and sentence for unpaid fines and costs; and (2) directed to any peace officer of the State of Texas commanding the officer to arrest a person convicted of an offense and bring the arrested person before that court immediately or on a day or at a term stated in the writ.</p>	<p>Art. 43.015(2), C.C.P. Special rules apply to capias pro fines issued for offenses committed by those under age 17. See Checklist 13-15. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Capias Pro Fine; Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System: Chapter 5.</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Prior to issuing a capias pro fine for the defendant’s failure to satisfy the judgment according to its terms the court must hold a hearing to determine whether the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant.</p>	<p>Art. 45.045(a-2)/45A.259(d), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Show Cause Prior to Issuing a Capias Pro Fine.</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A court has discretion when making a determination of undue hardship, but is authorized to consider:</p>	<p>Judges may allow a defendant to appear by telephone or videoconference if a personal appearance would impose an undue hardship. Arts. 45A.260 and 45A.258, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Significant physical or mental impairment or disability;</p>	<p>45A.257, C.C.P.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. Pregnancy and childbirth; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Substantial family commitments or responsibilities, including child or dependent care; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Work responsibilities and hours; <input type="checkbox"/> e. Transportation limitations; <input type="checkbox"/> f. Homelessness or housing insecurity; and <input type="checkbox"/> g. Any other factor the court determines relevant. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. At the hearing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. If the judge finds the judgment to impose an undue hardship, the judge must determine how the fine and costs should be satisfied. <input type="checkbox"/> b. If a justice or judge determines that the judgment does not impose an undue hardship, the judge must order the defendant to comply with the judgment not later than the 30th day after the determination is made. | <p>Art. 45A.259(e), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.259(f), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. The court may issue a <i>capias pro fine</i> only if the defendant fails to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Appear at the show cause hearing; or <input type="checkbox"/> b. Comply with an order issued at a show cause hearing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. A <i>capias pro fine</i> may be issued in electronic form. | <p>Art. 45A.259(d), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Clerk's Affidavit for Capias Pro Fine.</i></p> <p>Art. 43.021, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. A <i>capias pro fine</i> shall recite the judgment and sentence and command the peace officer to immediately bring the arrested person to court. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. A court must recall a <i>capias pro fine</i> if, before the <i>capias pro fine</i> is executed, the defendant: | <p>Arts. 43.05(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.259(g), C.C.P.</p> |

- ☐ a. Provides notice to the justice or judge that they have difficulty paying in compliance with the judgment and a reconsideration hearing is set, or
 - ☐ b. Voluntarily appears and makes a good faith effort to resolve the *capias pro fine*.
- ☐ 8. A *capias pro fine* authorizes a peace officer to place the defendant in jail until the business day following the date of the defendant’s arrest if the defendant cannot be brought before the court immediately.
- ☐ 9. If the court that issued the *capias pro fine* is unavailable, the arresting officer may take the defendant to one of the following locations in lieu of placing the defendant in jail:
 - ☐ a. if the court that issued the *capias pro fine* was a justice court, to a justice court with jurisdiction over Class C misdemeanors that is located within the same county; or
 - ☐ b. if the court that issued the *capias pro fine* was a municipal court, to a municipal court that is located within the same municipality.
- ☐ 10. A *capias pro fine* may be issued to any county in the State and shall be executed as in other cases, but no bail shall be taken.
- ☐ 11. A *capias pro fine* may issue simultaneously with civil enforcement of the judgment (i.e., execution).
- ☐ 12. When a judgment and sentence have been entered against a defendant and the defendant defaults in the discharge of the judgment, the judge may order the defendant confined in jail until discharged by law if the judge at a hearing makes a written determination that either:

This reconsideration hearing was created by the Legislature in 2019, and judges may allow a defendant to appear by telephone or videoconference if a personal appearance would impose an undue hardship. Arts. 45A.260 and 45A.258, C.C.P.

Art. 43.05(b), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.259(c), C.C.P.

Most municipal courts are unified, but state law does allow for the creation of multiple municipal courts. *Capias pro fine* commitment hearings may be heard at any court (or by any judge) in the city.

Art. 43.06, C.C.P.

Arts. 43.07 and 45A.263, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.261(a), C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026Forms Book: Order of Commitment; Judgment/Jail Credit Addendum*.

a. The defendant is not indigent and has failed to make a good faith effort to discharge the fine or costs; or

b. The defendant is indigent and:

(1) has failed to make a good faith effort to discharge the fine or costs under Article 45A.254, C.C.P. (community service); and

(2) could have discharged the fine or costs under Article 45A.254, C.C.P., (community service) without experiencing any undue hardship.

13. A certified copy of the judgment, sentence, and order is sufficient to authorize confinement.

14. The court should set out a period of time between eight and 24 hours as the period the defendant must remain in jail to satisfy \$150 of the fine and costs owed.

Note: Article 45A.257, C.C.P., authorizes the waiver of fines and costs if the defendant defaults in payment and the court determines that (1) the defendant is indigent and (2) the performance of community service would constitute an undue hardship on the defendant.

Art. 45A.261(b), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.262, C.C.P.

Jail credit for time served before the judgment must be credited to each case concurrently. Post-judgment credit can be ordered to be served consecutively (or stacked) by the court if all cases with which the fine is to be treated consecutively are identified in the order. *Ex parte Hannington*, 832 S.W.2d 355 (Tex. Crim App. 1992); Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. JC-0393 (2001); *Ex parte Minjares*, 582 S.W.2d 105 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978).

CHAPTER 3 PRO SE DEFENDANTS AND DEFENDANTS REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL

Defendants in municipal court have constitutional and statutory rights to the assistance of counsel. However, in municipal court, even indigent defendants do not have the right to a court-appointed attorney, except where the “interests of justice” require, per Art. 1.051(c), C.C.P. (For more information on “interests of justice” appointments, see, “The Oversimplification of the Assistance of Counsel in Class C Misdemeanors in Texas,” *The Recorder* (January 2009)). Most defendants accused of fine-only offenses appear in court pro se (unrepresented by counsel). This fact poses problems in ensuring that defendants are treated fairly. A court should have procedures for communicating with pro se defendants in two settings: (1) outside the courtroom; and (2) in the courtroom during hearings.

1. Communicating with Pro Se Defendants out of Court

Checklist 3-1	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Develop procedures and standing orders for the processing of walk-in defendants by support personnel. 	<p>For a more complete discussion of a criminal defendant’s rights, see <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 4.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Give walk-in defendants information on court proceedings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Pay special attention to the right to a jury trial and the right to counsel; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Be aware that special procedures apply when dealing with a juvenile. 	<p>See Chapter 4.</p> <p>See Chapter 13.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Instruct support personnel not to give legal advice. They may inform individuals of the procedures, but may not suggest or recommend a particular course of action. 	<p>Court support personnel may not engage in the unauthorized practice of law. Sec. 81.101, G.C.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3. When a guilty plea is processed or a fine is paid, the clerk should verify that it is being done by the defendant or person authorized to act for the defendant. 	<p>A guilty plea is void when it is not entered by or authorized by the defendant. <i>Ex parte Super</i>, 175 S.W. 697 (Tex. Crim. App. 1915).</p>

CHAPTER 3 PRO SE DEFENDANTS AND DEFENDANTS REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL

The majority of defendants in municipal courts do not retain counsel, and instead represent themselves in court proceedings. Though pro se defendants maintain the right to litigate their own cases, they often lack a proper understanding of court procedures and decorum. A defendant who elects to represent himself or herself cannot complain of the lack of effective assistance of counsel. The rules of evidence, procedure, and substantive law will be applied the same to all parties in a criminal trial whether that party is represented by counsel or appearing pro se. *Williams v. State*, 549 S.W.2d 183 (Tex. Crim. App. 1977).

While no special treatment is required for pro se defendants, judges and court personnel can efficiently facilitate the court’s docket by informing pro se defendants of their rights in court and by clearly explaining the court’s expectations for maintaining order and decorum.

2. Communicating with Pro Se Defendants in Court Proceedings

Checklist 3-2	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Remind the defendant that conversations with the judge are “court” proceedings. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Emphasize the right to retain counsel. Reasonable accommodations (by resetting appearance dates and/or granting continuances) should be provided to defendants who appear in court pro se but who after being advised of their right to counsel wish to seek the assistance of counsel. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. If the defendant chooses to represent himself or herself, inquire whether the defendant understands the consequences of proceeding without counsel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. There is no right to lay representation (except self-representation). <input type="checkbox"/> b. Allowing a lay person to act as an attorney representing anyone other than himself or herself permits unauthorized practice of law. This includes allowing a parent to represent his or her child. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. The judge should be aware of the defendant’s ignorance of legal procedure and rules of evidence in maintaining order and decorum. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. In the interests of fairness and order, the court may inform the defendant of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. General procedures and steps in the trial; 	<p>See Chapter 4 in this book for procedures regarding appearances.</p> <p>A warning and waiver of the constitutional right to retain counsel is required. <i>Warr v. State</i>, 591 S.W.2d 832 (Tex. Crim. App. 1979).</p> <p><i>U.S. v. Wilhelm</i>, 570 F.2d 461 (3d Cir. 1978).</p> <p>See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 1.</p>

- b. Voir dire and jury selection;
 - c. Options concerning opening statements;
 - d. Right to confront and examine prosecution witnesses;
 - e. Right to present defenses and defense evidence;
 - f. Right to testify on own behalf;
 - g. Right to request jury instructions;
 - h. Options concerning closing argument; and
 - i. Right to appeal.
6. If the defendant wishes to testify, inform him or her of the privilege against self-incrimination and obtain waiver.
7. The judge must maintain control of proceedings.
- a. If the defendant is unruly and disruptive, consider warning, restraint, or threat of contempt.

Warning to testifying defendant:
 “You have the constitutional right under the 5th Amendment not to testify and the fact that you do not testify cannot be held against you in any way. The prosecution is required to prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, and you are not obliged to present any evidence. If you do testify, you may be cross-examined, that is, asked questions by the prosecution on any matter relevant to any issue in the case. Do you understand that?”

[If the defendant says “yes”:]
 “Then, understanding that, it is your desire to testify on your own behalf?” See *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of a defendant’s 5th Amendment rights.

Illinois v. Allen, 397 U.S. 337 (1970). See Checklists 14-1 and 16-5.

CHAPTER 3 PRO SE DEFENDANTS AND DEFENDANTS REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL

3. Defendants Represented by Counsel

While most defendants appear pro se in municipal court, the number of defendants retaining counsel continues to increase. Judges should welcome representation by counsel and foster an environment for conducting the business of the court in accordance with the legal and ethical guidelines applicable to both the bench and the bar. The following are basic guidelines that municipal judges should keep in mind in communicating with attorneys.

Checklist 3-3	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. In municipal court, a defendant has the right to appear by counsel as in all other cases. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. In order to represent a defendant in any Texas court, an attorney must be licensed to practice law. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Upon proof of certain legal requirements and a motion by the Texas Board of Law Examiners, a person may be duly admitted and licensed by the Texas Supreme Court as an attorney and counselor at law and able to practice “in all Courts of the State of Texas.” <input type="checkbox"/> b. Attorneys licensed to practice law in other states may seek <i>pro hac vice</i> admission to practice in Texas courts. This requires the attorney to complete an application provided by the Texas Board of Law Examiners, pay fees, and file a sworn motion pursuant to Rule XIX of the Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas in the court where the attorney requests permission to participate in representation. The decision to grant or deny such a motion is not made by the court in which the application is filed—rather by the Board of Law Examiners. 	<p>Art. 45A.160, C.C.P.</p> <p>Individuals who engage in the unauthorized practice of law may be sued civilly in an effort to prohibit future occurrences. For additional information visit the Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee at www.txuplc.org.</p> <p>To see if an attorney is licensed and active to practice law in Texas (and to determine whether the attorney has a disciplinary history) visit the State Bar of Texas at www.texasbar.com.</p> <p>For more information on <i>pro hac vice</i> admission, visit the Texas Board of Law Examiners at www.ble.texas.gov.</p>

- ❑ 3. Judges should be just as familiar with the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct (setting ethical guidelines for lawyer) as they are with the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct. Lawyers are obligated to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct in all Texas courts.

- ❑ 4. Attorneys engaged in misconduct cast discredit on the legal profession. Judges have a special duty to maintain the integrity of the legal system. Hence judges also have a duty to prevent attorney misconduct. A judge who receives information clearly establishing that a lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Disciplinary Conduct has an ethical obligation to “take appropriate action.” “A judge having knowledge that a lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Disciplinary Conduct that raises a substantial question as to a lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects shall inform the Office of the General Counsel of the State Bar of Texas or take other appropriate action.”

- ❑ 5. Courts should consider requiring a letter of representation be on file with the court in every case where the defendant is represented by counsel. Such letters become part of the court’s file. A letter of representation is important for the following reasons:
 - ❑ a. It tells the court the scope of representation;

 - ❑ b. It provides the court with the attorney’s contact information that will be used in all subsequent communications from the court;

 - ❑ c. Prosecutors are not allowed to directly communicate with defendants represented by counsel. Rather, the prosecutor must communicate with the defendant through counsel; and

For more information, visit the Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism at www.legalethictexas.com.

Canon 3(D)(2), *Code of Judicial Conduct*.

The act of an attorney standing for or acting on behalf of a client is called “representation.” It is customary for defense attorneys to file a letter of representation informing both the court and the prosecution that a particular lawyer or law firm is representing the defendant in a specified matter. *Black’s Law Dictionary*

Rule 4.02, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

- d. It may become important documentary evidence in the event defendant counsel fails to appear in court or commits other violations of the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

- 6. The court may require the attorney to acknowledge the existence of any local rules (rules of decorum or guidelines for practicing before the court).

See, “An Introduction to Model Rules of Court Decorum”
Municipal Court Recorder
(Summer 2002) at 12.

CHAPTER 4 APPEARANCE AND PLEAS

1. Appearance

This checklist is a model for the court to follow during the first appearance by a defendant before the court. This process is often—though not quite properly—referred to as an “arraignment.” The court must take a plea before conversation about the case or sentencing should take place. When the defendant pleads guilty or nolo contendere, proceed to Checklist 8-1 if entering a final judgment. The defendant may also be making a conditional plea while requesting a driving safety course or deferred disposition. When the defendant pleads not guilty, the procedures in Chapters 6 and 7 follow. In either event, the procedures in Chapter 8 are necessary in entering a judgment of guilt or acquittal. Chapters 4 through 8 should be used together as a series of procedures used in resolving cases.

Checklist 4-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the defendant is appearing before you after being issued a citation, you shall perform the magistrate duties imposed by Art. 15.17, C.C.P., in the same manner as if the person had been arrested and brought before you as a magistrate.</p>	<p>Art. 15.17(g), C.C.P. See Checklist 1-1.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A judge may not accept a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in open court unless it appears that the defendant is mentally competent, and the plea is free and voluntary.</p>	<p>Art.45A.153(b), C.C.P. See also <i>Drope v. Missouri</i>, 420 U.S. 162 (1975). See <i>TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 8.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Ensure that the plea is made by the defendant or the defendant’s attorney.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the plea is made by any other person (parent, friend, spouse, etc.), do not accept the plea.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Because this is a criminal case, inform the person that the law only allows the defendant or his or her attorney to enter a plea.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. If the correct person is not before you, reset the case for defendant to appear.</p>	<p>“Court Calls Case # _____, <i>State v. (Defendant).</i>”</p> <p>“Are you <i>(Defendant)</i>?”</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Plea Form: In Person.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The defendant is entitled to a copy of the complaint at least one day before any criminal proceeding, unless the defendant waives that right.</p>	<p>Art. 1.05, C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Waiver of Right to be Prosecuted by Complaint.</p>

a. Ask the defendant if he or she understands the charge.

b. Give the defendant a copy of the complaint at least one day before trial, unless the defendant waives that right.

5. Admonishments:

a. Explain the range of punishment for the offense(s) before the court.

b. Explain defendant’s right to jury trial.

c. Explain defendant’s right to counsel.

“You are charged with _____, a misdemeanor punishable by a fine. Do you have a copy of the citation or complaint? Do you understand the nature of the charges against you?”

Art. 45A.101(g), C.C.P.

For a greater discussion of an accused’s rights, see *TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 4.

“_____, is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than \$_____ and not less than \$_____ (if offense has a minimum fine) and by _____ (if offense bears sanctions in addition to a fine).”

“You have the right to have a jury determine your guilt or innocence on this charge. Do you wish to have a jury trial, or do you waive a jury and wish to proceed before the court without a jury?”

“You have a right to be represented by an attorney in this case. Since the maximum penalty in this case does not include time in jail, you do not have a right under the law—neither the Texas nor U.S. Constitutions—to have an attorney appointed. You have the right to hire legal counsel. An attorney could advise you and help you make important decisions concerning the consequences and alternatives in this case. An attorney would be familiar with trial procedures and rules of

- ❑ d. Despite the general rule that indigent defendants accused of fine-only offenses are not statutorily entitled to the appointment of counsel, the exception is if “the interests of justice require representation.” This is a discretionary determination made by the judge.

- ❑ e. If represented by counsel, make sure the attorney’s name, address, and telephone number are noted on the docket.

- ❑ f. If the defendant is not represented by counsel, the defendant must waive the right to retain counsel.

- ❑ g. If the defendant wishes to retain counsel, reset the case for the defendant to have time to do so. If not, proceed.

- ❑ h. Explain defendant’s privilege against self-incrimination.

evidence. In this trial, you will be held to the same legal standards as if you were an attorney. Do you still wish to proceed representing yourself?”

Art. 1.051(c), C.C.P. Texas case law provides little guidance to such appointments. Criminal law scholars have opined, “Whether or not this is the case should be determined largely on the basis of whether the case presents defensive possibilities that are most likely to be adequately presented to the court only by an attorney. If this is the case, an attorney can and must be appointed regardless of the minor nature of the offense.” 42 Dix & Schmolesky, *Texas Practice: Criminal Practice & Procedure*, Sec. 29.32 (3d ed. 2011).

A warning and waiver of the constitutional right to retain counsel is required. See Chapter 3 concerning lay representation.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Non-Jury Trial Setting Form: Defendant Appears by Mail; and Non-Jury Trial Setting Form: Defendant Appears in Person.

“You are not required to testify and no one may make you testify. If you decide not to testify, I will not use the fact that you did not testify as evidence against you. Choosing to remain silent cannot be used against you.”

- i. Before accepting a plea of guilty or a plea of nolo contendere by a defendant charged with a misdemeanor involving family violence, the court shall admonish the defendant orally or in writing by using the statement to the right, verbatim.

“If you are convicted of a misdemeanor offense involving violence where you are or were a spouse, intimate partner, parent, or guardian of the victim or are or were involved in another, similar relationship with the victim, it may be unlawful for you to possess or purchase a firearm, including a handgun or long gun, or ammunition, pursuant to federal law under 18 U.S.C. Section 922(g)(9) or Section 46.04(b), Texas Penal Code. If you have any questions whether these laws make it illegal for you to possess or purchase a firearm, you should consult an attorney.” Art. 27.14(e), C.C.P.

- 6. If the defendant pleads not guilty:
 - a. Set the case for a pretrial hearing and/or trial; and
 - b. Provide the defendant with a copy of the setting order and docket the case.

While bail is not required, a specific rule applies to bail set by municipal and justice courts after charges have been filed. Under that rule, judges may only require a personal bond, unless certain determinations have been made. Art. 45A.107, C.C.P. See Checklist 1-5 (steps 11-13).

CHAPTER 4 APPEARANCE AND PLEAS

2. Pleas Made by Mail

Under Art. 27.14(c), C.C.P., a payment received without a plea constitutes a finding of guilty in open court as though a plea of nolo contendere and a written waiver of jury trial had been received. Municipal court clerks usually collect and process these pleas and payments. If a plea and waiver of jury trial and a request for the amount of fine and/or appeal bond is received, the court must notify the defendant either in person or by regular mail of the amount of fine or costs; information regarding the alternatives to the full payment of any fine or costs assessed, if the defendant is unable to pay the full amount; and, if requested, the amount of an appeal bond that the court will accept. Defendants have up to 31 days from the date of receiving the notice to pay the fine and costs or file an appeal bond with the court. A defendant charged with a misdemeanor involving family violence may not mail or deliver in person a plea of guilty or nolo contendere; this plea must be made in open court. Art. 27.14(b), C.C.P.

Judges should instruct clerks to prepare judgments on all the pleas, waivers of jury trial, and payments offered to the courts. An offer to pay a fine and costs is not a conviction until the judge accepts the plea, waiver of jury trial, and/or payment of the fine, and enters judgment.

Checklist 4-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the court receives payment by mail, without a plea:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Determine that the defendant is:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) at least 17 years of age;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) not a minor defendant charged with an Alcoholic Beverage Code offense or a tobacco offense under the Health and Safety Code; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) not charged with an offense involving family violence, as defined by Sec. 71.004, F.C.;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Determine that the offense is punishable by fine-only and that no other sanction (such as counseling, community service, or DL suspension) is mandatory.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Determine that the amount received is sufficient to cover the minimum lawful fine, court costs, and any other fees.</p>	<p>Art. 27.14(b) and (c), C.C.P.</p> <p>Article 27.14, C.C.P., allows adult defendants charged in municipal and justice courts with fine-only offenses to mail or deliver in person to the court a plea of guilty or nolo contendere (no contest) and a written waiver of jury trial.</p> <p>If a defendant is charged with a family violence offense, as defined by Section 71.004 of the Family Code, the judge must take the defendant's plea in open court. Art. 45A.151, C.C.P. See Checklist 4-3.</p> <p>Art. 27.14(c), C.C.P.</p>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Determine that the amount received is not more than the maximum lawful fine plus court costs and any other fees. <input type="checkbox"/> e. Determine that the payment is in an amount acceptable to you. <input type="checkbox"/> f. Determine that the payment is from the defendant, from defendant’s attorney, or made with the defendant’s agreement to be found guilty. <input type="checkbox"/> g. If the above requirements are met, accept the plea, waiver of jury trial, and/or payment and sign a judgment of guilty. | <p>Art. 27.14(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Plea Form: By Mail or Delivery to Court; and Judgment: Jury Waived – Guilty.</i></p> <p>A written acknowledgement of the disclosure, receipt, and list of any discovery provided to the defendant must be signed by each party before a plea of guilty or nolo contendere is accepted. It is unclear if an acknowledgment is necessary when no discovery was requested, ordered, or provided.
Art. 39.14(j), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> h. If the above requirements are not met, return the payment to the defendant or defense attorney, inform them of the acceptable fine amount and of any other applicable sanctions, and set the case for trial. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. If the defendant does not deliver a fine, but delivers a plea or request for bond amount, determine if defendant has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Pled guilty or nolo contendere. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Requested in writing that the court notify defendant of the amount of an appeal bond the court will approve. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Waived a jury trial in writing. | <p>Art. 27.14(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.155, C.C.P.</p> |

- d. Provided the court with defendant's or defense attorney's address.
- e. Delivered the request, plea, jury waiver, and address by defendant's appearance date.
- f. Extended his or her time by the "Mailbox Rule." If the defendant mailed the plea and jury waiver on or before the due date of appearance, and these documents are received by the clerk not later than 10 days after the due date, the plea and waiver are properly filed. Make sure the clerk keeps the envelope with the postmark.
- g. Determine that the offense is punishable by fine-only and that no other sanctions (such as counseling, community service, or DL suspension) are mandatory and that defendant is at least 17 years of age.
- h. Determine that the defendant is not charged with a misdemeanor involving family violence, as defined by Sec. 71.004, F.C.

Art. 45A.054, C.C.P. "Day" does not include Saturday, Sunday, or legal holidays. This rule increases the amount of time allowed to file a document when the document is filed by mail.

Any plea to a family violence case must be made in open court. Art. 45A.151(d), C.C.P.

Art. 66.252, C.C.P., requires family violence defendants to be fingerprinted. This fingerprinting could occur in open court at the time of the plea. The court clerk, on disposition, must report the person's citation or arrest and the disposition of the case to DPS using a uniform incident fingerprint card or an electronic methodology approved by DPS. The arresting law enforcement agency is charged with preparing the fingerprint card, but with Class C family violence cases, it is possible that a defendant was never arrested. In this situation, the judge may order a law enforcement officer to use a uniform incident fingerprint card to take the defendant's fingerprints.

- i. If the above are done, notify defendant/defense attorney—either in person or by certified mail return receipt requested—of the amount of the fine assessed and the amount of the appeal bond.

- 3. If the defendant mails a plea of not guilty to the court, the plea should be processed in the same way as a plea of not guilty made in open court.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice to Defendant Following Plea by Mail*. Defendant must pay fine or post the appeal bond by the 31st day after receiving the notice. Remember that the bond is timely filed if postmarked before the 31st day and received within 10 days. Art. 45A.054, C.C.P.

Article 27.16(b), C.C.P., allows a defendant charged with a misdemeanor for which the maximum possible punishment is by fine-only, in lieu of entering a plea in open court, to mail to the court a plea of not guilty.

CHAPTER 4 APPEARANCE AND PLEAS

3. Pleas in Open Court

Most of the requirements relating to acceptance of a plea of guilty or a plea of nolo contendere are contained in Article 26.13, C.C.P. The Court of Criminal Appeals has held such statutory requirements inapplicable to misdemeanor cases. *Empy v. State*, 571 S.W.2d 526, 529 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978). Despite the increased number of direct and indirect consequences of being convicted of a Class C misdemeanor in Texas, federal due process only requires a plea of guilty in a misdemeanor be made knowingly and intelligently after being admonished as to the range of punishment. *Tatum v. State*, 861 S.W.2d 27 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1993, pet. ref’d). A guilty plea is not rendered involuntary by lack of knowledge of collateral consequence (e.g., deportation), and defendants have no constitutional right to be admonished of such consequences. *State v. Jimenez*, 987 S.W.2d 886 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999).

Checklist 4-3	Script/Notes
<p>If a defendant is charged with an offense involving family violence, the judge must take the defendant’s plea in open court.</p> <p>“No contest” means that the defendant is neither admitting nor denying the charge but is choosing not to contest the charges in court. In municipal courts, a plea of no contest has the same legal effect as a plea of guilty.</p> <p>The defendant may waive a trial by jury in writing. Only when a written waiver is made can the court proceed. The decision to waive rests with the defendant. The manner, in writing, is controlled by statute.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.151(d), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 66.252, C.C.P., requires family violence defendants to be fingerprinted. This fingerprinting could occur in open court at the time of the plea. The court clerk, on disposition, must report the person’s citation or arrest and the disposition of the case to DPS using a uniform incident fingerprint card or an electronic methodology approved by DPS. The arresting law enforcement agency is charged with preparing the fingerprint card, but with Class C family violence cases, it is possible that a defendant was never arrested. In this situation, the judge may order a law enforcement officer to use a uniform incident fingerprint card to take the defendant’s fingerprints.</p> <p>Art. 27.02(5), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.155, C.C.P.</p>

- 1. Give the admonishments as required in Checklist 4-1 and request a plea.
- 2. If the defendant refuses to plead:
 - a. Enter a plea of not guilty;
 - b. Note on docket that defendant would not plea and that a plea of not guilty was entered by the court;
 - c. Note defendant’s election of jury trial or jury waiver on docket;
 - d. Set a case for trial, and
 - d. Set a pretrial and trial date.
 - e. Provide defendant with Setting Notice for Pretrial or Trial. Go to Chapters 6 and 7.
- 3. If defendant pleads not guilty:
 - a. Enter a plea of not guilty;
 - b. Note on docket;
 - c. Note defendant’s election of jury trial or jury waiver on docket; set a pretrial and trial date; and
 - d. Provide defendant with Setting Notice for Pretrial or Trial. Go to Chapters 6 and 7.

Arts. 27.16(a) and 45A.152, C.C.P. See *TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 8.

“If you will not plead, I am required by law to enter a plea of not guilty for you. I have done so. Do you want a jury trial? Or do you want to waive a jury trial and have a trial without a jury?”

“I accept a plea of not guilty. Do you wish to have a jury trial or to waive a jury trial and have a trial before the court?”

While bail is not required, a specific rule applies to bail set by municipal and justice courts after charges have been filed. Under that rule, judges may only require a personal bond, unless certain determinations have been made. Art. 45A.107, C.C.P. See Checklist 1-5 (steps 11-13).

- ❑ 4. If the defendant will not elect jury or bench trial, set case for jury trial.

- ❑ 5. If the defendant is charged with an offense that is eligible for dismissal for a Driving Safety Course (DSC) pursuant to Subchapter H, Chapter 45A, C.C.P., the court must inform the defendant that DSC may be an option.

- ❑ 6. If defendant pleads guilty or no contest without conditions, go to Step 9.
 - ❑ a. The most common conditional plea is a plea of guilty or no contest made with an election to take DSC. If the defendant elects DSC, go to Checklists 5-1 and 5-2.

 - ❑ b. Another conditional plea is a plea pursuant to a plea bargaining with the prosecutor.
 - ❑ (1) Advise the defendant that you, the judge, are not bound by the plea offer.

 - ❑ (2) Inform the defendant that if you reject the offer, the plea may be withdrawn.

 - ❑ (3) Accept or deny the offer.

 - ❑ (4) If rejected, permit the defendant to withdraw the plea of guilty or no contest.

“Since you will not tell me whether you want a trial with or without a jury, I am setting your case for a jury trial.”

See Checklist 5-1 for DSC eligibility.
 Art. 45A.353, C.C.P. “You may have the right to elect to have your case(s) dismissed for taking a Driving Safety Course or Motorcycle Operator Training Course under Subchapter H, Chapter 45A, C.C.P. Do you wish me to further explain that option, or do you wish to elect to take a Driving Safety Course?”

“I am not bound by the plea agreement you made with the State.”

“If I reject the agreement, I will permit you to withdraw your plea of guilty or no contest.”

“I accept the plea agreement.”

“I reject the plea agreement. Do you wish to withdraw the plea of guilty or no contest and enter a plea of not guilty?”

e. Discharge the defendant.

3. Following a plea of guilty or nolo contendere entered while detained in jail, the judge shall grant a motion for new trial made not later than 10 days after the rendition of judgment and sentence, and not afterward.

A written acknowledgement of the disclosure, receipt, and list of any discovery provided to the defendant must be signed by each party before a plea of guilty or nolo contendere is accepted. It is unclear if an acknowledgment is necessary when no discovery was requested, ordered, or provided. Art. 39.14(j), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.154(b), C.C.P.

Remember that the motion is timely filed if postmarked on or before the 10th day and received within 10 days.

CHAPTER 5 DRIVING SAFETY COURSES (DSC), Chapter 45A, Subchapter H

1. Eligibility for Mandatory DSC

Checklist 5-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. To be entitled to mandatory DSC (where the court must grant DSC according to limited terms), the defendant must meet a four-point test. The elements of that test are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The defendant must elect DSC; <input type="checkbox"/> b. The election must be timely; <input type="checkbox"/> c. The defendant must be charged with a qualified offense; and <input type="checkbox"/> d. The defendant must be qualified. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The defendant must elect to take DSC. No special form or language appears to be necessary. That election should be coupled with a plea of guilty or nolo contendere. The defendant may make that election:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. In person; <input type="checkbox"/> b. By attorney; <input type="checkbox"/> c. By certified mail, return receipt requested; or <input type="checkbox"/> d. If authorized by the court, through a court-designated e-mail address or internet portal. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Determine whether defendant has made the election and plea in Step 2 by the answer date on the citation.</p>	<p>The defendant must plead guilty or nolo contendere before the court orders the defendant to take DSC under Article 45A.351, C.C.P.</p> <p>See Step 2 below.</p> <p>See Step 3 below.</p> <p>See Steps 4 and 5 below.</p> <p>See Step 6 below.</p> <p>Art. 45A.352(a)(1) and (4), C.C.P. A defendant under the age of 17 must appear and enter a plea in open court. Art. 45A.452, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.352(a)(4), C.C.P.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Amount of time increased by the “Mailbox Rule.” | <p>Art. 45A.054, C.C.P. If the request for a DSC is mailed first class on or before the appearance date on the citation and received by the clerk not later than 10 business days after the due date for appearance, the request is timely filed. Make sure the clerk keeps the envelope with the postmark. “Day” does not include Saturday, Sunday, or legal holidays.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. If the defendant has not pled and elected to take a DSC by the answer date on citation, determine that the defendant was advised of his or her right to take a driving safety course. | <p>Art. 45A.354(a), C.C.P. Printing notice of DSC eligibility on the defendant’s copy of the citation should satisfy this requirement.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. If the defendant was not advised of his or her right to a DSC, advise the defendant now and allow the defendant to enter a plea of guilty or no contest and request a DSC as if it had been timely made. | <p>Art 45A.354(b), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. A defendant age 25 or older may elect DSC for an alleged offense that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Is within the jurisdiction of the municipal or justice court; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Involves the operation of a motor vehicle; and <input type="checkbox"/> c. Is defined by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Section 472.022, T.C. (Obeying Warning Signs); <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Subtitle C, Title 7, T.C. (Rules of the Road); or <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Section 729.001(a)(3), T.C. (Operation of Motor Vehicle by Minor). | <p>Art. 45A.351(a), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5. A defendant under the age of 25 may elect DSC for an alleged offense that: | <p>Art. 45A.351(b), C.C.P.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Is within the jurisdiction of the municipal or justice court; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Involves the operation of a motor vehicle; and <input type="checkbox"/> c. Is classified as a moving violation. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Subchapter H of Chapter 45A does not apply to a person who holds a commercial driver’s license or held a commercial driver’s license when the offense was committed. | <p>Art. 45A.351(c), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. DSC is not available for certain excepted offenses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Speeding 95 mph or more; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Speeding 25 mph or more over the posted speed limit; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Fail to remain at collision scene; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Duty to give information and aid; <input type="checkbox"/> e. Overtaking and passing a school bus; <input type="checkbox"/> f. Offenses committed in a construction or maintenance work zone while workers are present, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Inspection Offenses; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Pedestrian Offenses; and <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Safety Belt and Child Safety Seat Offenses. <input type="checkbox"/> g. Serious traffic violations defined in Section 522.003(25), T.C. Serious traffic violations are convictions committed while operating a commercial motor vehicle for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Excessive speeding 15 mph or more over the posted speed limit; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Reckless driving (Class B misdemeanor); | <p>Art. 45A.352(a)(5)(A), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.352(a)(5)(B), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.353(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.353(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.353(1) C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.353(3), C.C.P.</p> <p>Sec. 542.404(a), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 542.404(a), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 542.404(a), T.C.</p> <p>Art. 45A.353(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(i), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(ii), T.C.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (3) Violations of state and local traffic laws other than parking, weight, or vehicle defect violations, arising in connection with a fatal accident; ☐ (4) Improper or erratic lane change; ☐ (5) Following too closely; or ☐ (6) Operating a commercial motor vehicle without a proper commercial driver’s license or permit. | <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(iii), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(iv), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(v), T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 522.003(25)(A)(vi) and (B), T.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 8. If a defendant is charged with more than one eligible traffic offense arising out of the same criminal transaction, each charge is eligible for dismissal following successful completion of one Driving Safety Course. | <p>Art. 45A.352(b), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 9. The defendant must be qualified for Mandatory DSC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ a. The defendant must not have completed DSC under Subchapter H of Chapter 45A, C.C.P., in the 12 months preceding the offense. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (1) The 12 month period begins with completion of the course. ☐ (2) The 12 month period ends on the date of the current offense. ☐ b. The defendant must produce evidence of financial responsibility under the Texas Motor Vehicle Responsibility Act. This is most commonly done by presenting a motor vehicle insurance card. | <p>Art. 45A.352(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>A defendant without a Texas driver’s license who is an active member or spouse or dependent child of an active member of the U.S. military must not have completed a DSC in the 12 months preceding the offense in any state.
Art. 45A.352(a)(3), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.352(a)(6), C.C.P.; Ch. 601, T.C.</p> |

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ c. The defendant must produce a valid Texas driver’s license or permit or be a member, spouse, or dependent child of a member of the U.S. military forces serving on active duty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (1) Requiring a Texas driver’s license or permit is likely to violate the “Full Faith and Credit” provision of the U.S. Constitution. This may be remedied by the court providing a similar relief to out-of-state drivers under Subchapter G, Chapter 45A, C.C.P. (deferred disposition). 	<p>Art. 45A.352(a)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. IV, U.S. Constitution. See Checklist 8-2.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 10. Alternatives to Mandatory DSC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ a. Discretionary DSC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (1) If the defendant is not eligible for Mandatory DSC because they took a course in the 12 months preceding the citation or they failed to make a timely election, the court may still grant DSC. ☐ (2) If the court grants discretionary DSC, the procedures in Checklist 5-2 are followed, except: ☐ (3) The court may assess a fine not to exceed the maximum possible fine for the offense. ☐ b. The court may consider deferred disposition under Subchapter G of Chapter 45A, C.C.P., even if a defendant is not qualified for DSC under Subchapter H of Chapter 45A, C.C.P. 	<p>Art. 45A.352(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>The administrative DSC fine in this article is separate from the punitive fine that could be assessed on conviction. Art. 45A.358(a)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>See Checklist 8-2. The defendant may not be granted deferred disposition for a traffic offense committed in a work zone while workers are present (Sec. 472.022, T.C.), an offense involving motor vehicle control committed by the holder of a commercial driver’s license, or Driving or Operating Watercraft Under the Influence of Alcohol (DUI) if the minor has two or more prior DUI convictions.</p>

CHAPTER 5 DRIVING SAFETY COURSE (DSC)

2. Procedure for Granting DSC

Checklist 5-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. When the court accepts the plea of guilty or no contest and determines that the defendant is eligible, the court should enter judgment on the plea and defer imposition of judgment.</p>	<p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Judgment: Driving Safety Course Granted; and Request for a Driving Safety Course. Art. 45.0511(c) /45A.356(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Court must assess and collect all state and local court costs.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.358(a), C.C.P.; Sec. 133.101, L.G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court must impose the following conditions:</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Defer imposition of sentence for 90 days;</p>	<p>Art. 45A.356(a), C.C.P. Note: An order of deferral terminates any liability under a bond given for the charge. Art. 45A.356(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. During the deferral period, require the defendant to successfully complete a driving safety course approved by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation or a course under the motorcycle operator training and safety program approved under Chapter 662, T.C.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.352(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. During the deferral period, present the court with a uniform certificate of completion of the driving safety course or verification of completion of the motorcycle operator training course.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.356(a)(1), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. During the deferral period, present to the court the defendant’s DPS driving record showing that the defendant had not completed an approved driving safety course or motorcycle operator training course in the 12 months preceding the date of the citation.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.356(a)(2), C.C.P.</p>

A judge, as an alternative to receiving the defendant’s driving record, may, at the time the defendant requests a driving safety course or motorcycle operator training course, require the defendant to pay a reimbursement fee equal to the sum of the fee as established by Sec. 521.048, T.C., and the state electronic Internet portal fee for obtaining the defendant’s driving record by using the state electronic Internet portal, and require DPS to provide by means of the state electronic Internet portal a copy of the defendant’s driving record on request to the court “as soon as practicable.” The custodian of a municipal or county treasury who receives reimbursement fees collected under this subsection is required to keep a record of the fees and, without deduction or prorating, forward the fees to the Comptroller of Public Accounts.

Art. 45A.359(b), C.C.P.

e. During the deferral period, present to the court an affidavit stating the defendant is not taking a course and did not take a course not reflected on the driving record.

Art. 45A.356(a)(3), C.C.P.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Affidavit for a Driving Safety Course*.

f. If the defendant did not have a valid Texas driver’s license or permit and is a member, spouse, or dependent child of a member, of the U.S. military serving in active duty, the affidavit must state that the defendant was not taking a driving safety course or motorcycle operator course in another state on the date of request and had not completed one in the preceding 12 months from the current offense.

Art. 45A.356(a)(4), C.C.P.

4. The court may require the payment of a reimbursement fee in an amount of not more than \$10. If more than one offense are dismissed through a single DSC, this reimbursement fee may be assessed on each charge.

Art. 45A.358(a)(1); (a-1), C.C.P.

a. This fee is not refundable.

Art. 45A.358(b), C.C.P

b. See Step 10 for special instructions on assessing a fine as part of discretionary DSC.

Art. 45A.358(a)(2), C.C.P.

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. If the defendant completes all of these terms during the 90 day deferral period and presents the court the required evidence, the court shall:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Remove the judgment;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Dismiss the charge; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Report the date the DSC was completed to DPS.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. That report cannot be used for any purpose including increasing insurance rates.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. If the defendant fails to complete the terms during the 90 day deferral period, the court shall:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Notify the defendant in writing:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Mailed to the address on file with the court;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) That the defendant failed to fulfill the orders of the court; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) That the defendant is required to appear at a particular place and time to show good cause why the defendant did not timely comply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. If the defendant does not appear, enter an adjudication of guilt and impose a fine.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If the defendant appears and does not show good cause for non-compliance, enter an adjudication of guilt and impose a fine.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. If the defendant appears and shows good cause for non-compliance, the court may allow an extension to allow the defendant to present proof of compliance.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.356(c), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Judgment: Driving Safety Course Program Granted.</i></p> <p>Art. 45A.356(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.357, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.356(e)(1) and (2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.356(e), C.C.P. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Driving Safety Course: Notice to Defendant to Show Cause.</i></p> <p>Art. 45A.356(f), C.C.P. See Checklist 8-1.</p> <p>Art. 45A.356(f), C.C.P.; See Checklist 8-1.</p> <p>Art. 45A.355, C.C.P.</p> |
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CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

Chapter 45A, C.C.P., is silent on pretrial matters; accordingly, Article 28.01, C.C.P., governs pretrial matters in municipal court. Article 28.01 provides that the court may set the case for a pretrial hearing before the case is set for a trial on the merits. The court may direct the prosecutor and the defendant (and his or her attorney of record) to appear. The defendant must be present at a pretrial proceeding. In municipal courts, pretrial hearings may be held on matters regarding any pleadings of the defendant, special pleas, motions to quash, motions for continuance, motions to suppress, motions for change of venue, discovery, entrapment, and motions for the appointment of an interpreter. See Article 28.01, Sec. 1, C.C.P.

Although Article 45A.158, C.C.P., requires a prosecutor to be present to represent the State at trial, a prosecutor is not always required at pretrial proceedings. If a pretrial proceeding is held to inform the defendant about procedures, such as his or her right to have an attorney (not appointed by the court), then the prosecutor need not appear. If, however, the pretrial proceeding is held to resolve a contested issue, or when the judge will be required to hear evidence the prosecutor should be present to represent the State. The judge cannot serve as the State’s attorney.

Although the court is not required to set a matter for a pretrial hearing, it is the local rule in many courts to require that the parties attend a pretrial hearing when the case has been set for a jury trial. It is also a common local rule to set cases for pretrial to allow the parties to reach a plea bargain agreement.

For more discussion on pretrial proceedings, see *TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System: Chapter 8*.

1. Conducting a Hearing

Checklist 6-1	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. If a pretrial hearing has been requested by the State or the defendant or local rules require that pretrial hearing be set, the Court will set the matter for pretrial hearing.	Art. 28.01, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. If a hearing is set, notice must be given to both the municipal prosecutor and the defendant. The following matters should be heard:	Art. 28.01, Sec. 2, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Arraignment, if necessary;	See Checklist 6-2.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Appointment of counsel, if necessary;	See <i>TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System: Chapter 4</i> and Art.1.051(c), C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Pleadings of the defendant;	
<input type="checkbox"/> d. Special pleas, if any (such as double jeopardy);	See <i>TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System: Chapter 8</i> .

- e. Exceptions to form or substance of the complaint (Motions to Quash);
- f. Motions for continuance;
- g. Motions to suppress evidence;
- h. Motions for change of venue do not apply to municipal court, unless teen court has been granted;
- i. Discovery;
- j. Entrapment; and
- k. Motions for appointment of interpreter.
- 3. Other motions (including but not limited to the election of jury punishment).
- 4. Notice can be made in open court if the defendant or attorney of record is present, by personal service, or in writing depending on the order of the court.
- 5. The defense must have 10 days notice of trials or pretrials in which to file motions.
- 6. Matters not raised within seven days of the pretrial hearing are waived, except by permission of the court for good cause shown.
- 7. The defendant has the right to open and close the argument on all defense pleadings presented to the court.
- 8. Testimony should be limited to the issue contained in the motion.
- 9. The Rules of Evidence may not apply in all pretrial proceedings.
 - a. The parties should be provided the opportunity to cross-examine, rebut, or argue if the other side is permitted to present evidence or argue.

For a detailed discussion of election and jury punishment, see *The Recorder* (August 2000).

Art. 28.01, Sec. 3, C.C.P.

Art. 28.01, Sec. 2, C.C.P.

Art. 28.01, Sec. 2, C.C.P.

Art. 28.02, C.C.P.

Arraignments are not required in misdemeanor cases punishable by fine only. See Checklist 16-2.

10. After the judge makes a decision on the motions presented, the judge announces:

a. Granted; or

b. Denied.

Rulings are discussed in *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 2, Section I, Part C.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

2. Arraignment

Arraignments are not required in misdemeanor cases punishable by fine only. This has historically caused confusion in municipal and justice courts because the Code of Criminal Procedure provides no proper name for a defendant’s initial appearance to enter a plea in municipal or justice court. While in the most general sense of the word, the defendant’s first appearance in municipal court is an arraignment, the lack of a proper name has resulted in cities using various descriptive labels (i.e., “initial appearance” and “appearance docket”). Presumably, Texas law does not classify what occurs in municipal court as an arraignment because most defendants accused of fine-only offenses have the option of entering a plea without making a physical appearance in court (i.e., entering a plea by mail pursuant to Article 27.14 or 27.16, C.C.P.) and because municipal courts are not required to comply with all of the other provisions in Chapter 26, C.C.P.

Checklist 6-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the court has followed the procedures in Checklist 4-1 concerning appearance, a formal arraignment is not necessary.</p>	<p>Arraignments in municipal courts are not specifically required or prohibited.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The purpose of an arraignment is twofold:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Fix identity of the accused; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Take the plea of the accused.</p>	<p>Arts. 26.01-26.03, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Arraignments are required in all felonies and misdemeanors punishable by confinement.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Only a court having jurisdiction over a particular offense may arraign the defendant. For instance, a municipal judge is permitted only to arraign defendants charged with fine-only misdemeanors filed in the court where the judge presides.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. When a magistrate administers the warnings required by Article 15.17, C.C.P., it is not an arraignment although it is sometimes improperly referred to as such.</p>	<p>If the court orders an arraignment, the court cannot refuse to accept a waiver of arraignment from an attorney representing the defendant in order to require the defendant to appear. Art. 26.011, C.C.P.</p> <p>See Checklist 1-1.</p>

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

3. Motions for Continuance

Checklist 6-3	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The court must keep a docket in each case showing whether the trial was by bench or jury. The exact method of maintaining and storing the docket is left to the discretion of the court.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.053, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Motions for continuance are used by the prosecutor or defendant to postpone or continue the trial at a later setting.</p>	<p>Chapter 29, C.C.P., governs continuances.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court may continue the case upon the written motion of either party, upon “sufficient cause shown,” but only for as long as is necessary.</p>	<p>Art. 29.02, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The court may continue the trial on its own motion; however,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The court must continue the trial as a matter of law where the defendant has neither been arrested nor served with summons, or when insufficient time for trial exists in the term of court (an unlikely event); or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. If a jury panel is not available, the whole docket may be continued or reset.</p>	<p>Art. 29.01, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. In municipal courts of record, all motions for continuance must be in writing to be appealed.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Motions must be sworn to by the moving party and affidavits should be attached showing sufficient facts to justify the continuance.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. All motions for continuance must be “for sufficient cause.” The motion must be in writing and state cause for continuance.</p>	<p>Arts. 29.01 and 29.02, C.C.P.; see Art. 29.011, C.C.P., for religious continuance.</p> <p>Arts. 29.02 and 29.08, C.C.P., and <i>Montoya v. State</i>, 810 S.W.2d 160 (Tex. Crim. App. 1989).</p> <p>Art. 29.03, C.C.P.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. The State’s first motion for continuance based on a missing witness must contain the witness’s name and address, allegations of the efforts made to obtain the witness, and an assertion that the testimony is material. | <p>Art. 29.04, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Subsequent motions by the State, in addition to requirements above, must also show the facts to be established by the missing witness, that those facts are material, that the witness will be available at the next term of court, and that no other witness can testify to the same matter. | <p>Art. 29.05, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. The defendant has similar requirements for both first and subsequent motions. The defendant must also show that the defendant did not cause the witness’s absence and that the motion is not made for the sole purpose of a delay of trial. | <p>Art. 29.06, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Motions may be by agreement or unopposed, subject to the court’s approval. Agreed motions do not need to be argued, unless the court believes it is necessary. | <p>Art. 29.02, C.C.P. These motions are presented in open court.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. When a hearing is conducted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) The court is granted broad discretion in determining “sufficient cause.” <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Opposing affidavits can be filed. <input type="checkbox"/> (3) The court may rule on affidavits or hear evidence or argument within its discretion. | <p>Art. 29.02, C.C.P., and <i>Taylor v. State</i>, 612 S.W.2d 566 (Tex. Crim. App. 1981).</p> <p>Art. 29.09, C.C.P.</p> |

- 7. The court has broad discretion in granting or denying motions for continuance and in resetting the case once a motion is granted.

- 8. Motions for continuance during trial can only be granted if:
 - a. A surprise occurs;
 - b. Due diligence would not have prevented the surprise; and
 - c. The surprise prevents a fair trial.

A continuance may be only for as long as is necessary. Arts. 29.02 and 29.03, C.C.P.

In assault cases involving family violence or a victim under 17, the court must consider victim impact on a defendant's continuance (on State's request) and, if requested, state on the record the reason for granting or denying the continuance. Art. 29.14, C.C.P.

Art. 29.13, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

4. Motions to Dismiss the Case

Checklist 6-4	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Ascertain that a legal issue is raised and not a defense to prosecution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Pretrial motions asserting innocence or a legal defense should be considered a plea of not guilty. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Motions to dismiss must be based on statutory or constitutional grounds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Statutory grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) The only statutory special plea is based on prior trial (double jeopardy). <input type="checkbox"/> (2) A prior conviction, acquittal, mistrial, or reversal on appeal are statutory and constitutional grounds for dismissal. <input type="checkbox"/> (3) A prior trial finding requires that a previous trial prosecuting the same offense took place. <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Dismissal for statute of limitations; the charging instrument shows it was filed more than two years after the date of the commission of the offense (or three years for assault under Section 22.01 of the Penal Code and involves family violence). 	<p>Arts. 45A.151 and 27.05, C.C.P. A defendant who is detained in jail before trial for a fine-only offense may enter the special plea of double jeopardy while in jail. Art. 45A.151(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 12.02, C.C.P. The day on which the offense was committed and the day on which the complaint is filed are excluded from the computation of time. Art. 12.04, C.C.P.; Sec. 311.014, G.C.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (5) The offense charged in the complaint must also be under the jurisdiction of the municipal court as set forth in Article 4.14, C.C.P. or Section 29.003, G.C. ☐ (6) No such violation exists in statute, code, or ordinance. This kind of motion should be based on the complaint alone. | <p>Art. 4.14, C.C.P.; Sec. 29.003, G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ b. Constitutional grounds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (1) The defendant’s constitutional right to a speedy trial has been violated leading to a denial of due process so great as to require dismissal based on demonstrable harm to the defendant. Evaluate legal issues presented regarding speedy trial issues with care. | <p>U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment. See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of constitutional issues.</p> <p>Speedy trial motions are not available under Article 32A.02, C.C.P., as it was declared unconstitutional and repealed by the Legislature in 2005. <i>Meshell v. State</i>, 739 S.W.2d 246 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 3. The prosecutor may dismiss a criminal case at any time, but only with the judge’s permission. To do so, the prosecutor must file a written statement explaining the reason for the dismissal, and that reason must be included in the dismissal order. | <p>Art. 32.02, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 4. Dismissal is not the appropriate remedy to dispose of a case because the defendant is not competent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ a. A judge may not accept a plea of guilty or a plea of nolo contendere from a defendant in open court unless it appears to the judge that the defendant is mentally competent and the plea is free and voluntary. | <p>See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 4 for a discussion of competency.</p> <p>Art. 45A.153, C.C.P.</p> |

- b. The conviction of an accused person while he is legally incompetent violates due process. To protect a criminal defendant's constitutional rights, a trial court must inquire into the accused's mental competence once the issue is sufficiently raised.

- 5. Dismissal is not an appropriate remedy for motions alleging:
 - a. Statute or ordinance is void for vagueness in violation of the due process provisions of the 14th Amendment.

 - b. Statute or ordinance in the instant case denies the defendant equal protection in violation of the Constitution.

 - c. Prosecutorial misconduct.

See *Drope v. Missouri*, 420 U.S. 162, 171-72 (1975) and *McDaniel v. State*, 98 S.W.3d 704, 709 (Tex. Crim. App. 2003).

See Checklist 11-1. Relief for defendants making such constitutional attacks when deemed valid by the judge is acquittal (judgment of not guilty) at trial.

State v. Johnson, 821 S.W.2d 609 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991).

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

5. Motions to Quash the Complaint

Checklist 6-5	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A complaint vests the municipal court with jurisdiction to try a case. Motions objecting to the complaint are called motions to quash the complaint. These motions are properly made to the allegations of the complaint on its face; they are not properly related to the evidence that would prove the allegations, or the sufficiency of that evidence.</p>	<p>Arts. 45A.101, 45A.101, and 45A.102, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The complaint shall commence:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. “In the name and by the authority of the State of Texas.”</p>	<p>Art. 45A.101(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The complaint must state:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The name or description of the defendant;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. That the accused committed an offense;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A venue allegation that the offense was committed in the territorial limits of the municipality; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The date on which the offense was committed and the date the complaint is signed (these dates generally must be within two years of each other).</p>	<p>Art. 45A.101(a), C.C.P. See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 4 for a discussion on complaints.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The complaint shall conclude:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. “Against the peace and dignity of the State” (penal statutes) and it must, when appropriate, also conclude “Contrary to said ordinance” (municipal ordinances).</p>	<p>Art. 12.02, C.C.P. For assault under Section 22.01 of the Penal Code that involves family violence, the dates must be within three years of each other.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Complaints must be sworn.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.002(1), C.C.P.</p>

- ❑ 6. The offense alleged in “plain and intelligible words” should include:
 - ❑ a. Every element of the offense;
 - ❑ b. The facts sufficient to identify a particular offense to be defended against and sufficient facts to enable the defendant to plead the judgment in bar of further prosecution;
 - ❑ c. The intent required under the statute or ordinance, if any;
 - ❑ d. The name of the owner of property if that is an element of the offense;
 - ❑ e. A specific description of property if that is an element of the offense;
 - ❑ f. Language used in the allegation should be clear and concise; and
 - ❑ g. The exact language of the statute or ordinance is usually most appropriate, but not required.

Kindley v. State, 879 S.W.2d 261 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1994, no pet.).

- ❑ 7. If the defendant does not object to a defect, error, or irregularity of form or substance in a complaint before the day trial commences, the defendant waives the right to object to the complaint.

Art. 45A.102, C.C.P.

Article 45A.102, C.C.P. does not mean that a defendant must make a motion to quash before the date on which the case is set for trial.

Sanchez v. State, 138 S.W.3d 324 (Tex. Crim. App. 2004).

The trial court is not prohibited from requiring that each objection to a complaint be made at an earlier time (e.g., pretrial hearing).

See Checklist 6-1.

- ❑ 8. Granting the motion to quash does not bar re-prosecution with a proper complaint if the new complaint is filed within the statute of limitations.

Art. 28.04, C.C.P.

- 9. The error can be cured if the complaint is dismissed and refiled with appropriate corrections. This must be done:
 - a. In writing;
 - b. Before the date of trial; or
 - c. On the date of trial or during trial if the defense does not object.

This method of dismissal and refile is recommended over the process of amendment. It is not clear if a complaint can be amended, nor in what manner it can be done.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

One of the guiding principles of the American legal system is the idea of an independent and neutral judiciary. In order to ensure the aims of justice and to protect the integrity of the judicial system, all judges must understand the law governing (1) disqualification and (2) recusal. While the terms disqualification and recusal are used interchangeably, such use is a grievous error. If a judge is disqualified under the constitution, he or she is absolutely without jurisdiction in the case, and any judgment rendered by him or her is void, without effect, and subject to collateral attack. The failure of a judge to recuse when recusal is appropriate can constitute a violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct. Failure to recuse may rise to the level of disqualification when it impacts a litigant’s right to due process.

Article V, Section 11 of the Texas Constitution provides grounds for disqualifying a judge from sitting in any case. Similarly, Article 30.01, C.C.P., provides instances in which the judge is disqualified regardless of the judge’s application of discretion. The defendant cannot waive the judge’s disqualification.

While disqualification is mandatory, recusal lies in a judge’s appraisal of the individual situation. While this determination can only be made in light of the specifics of a situation, the Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18b provide grounds for when a judge shall recuse. Remember, however that judges are obligated to decide issues presented in cases and must not unnecessarily recuse themselves even when the judges might prefer not to decide the issues. *Ex parte Ellis*, 275 S.W.3d 109 (Tex. App.—Austin 2008, no pet.).

While disqualification and recusal are very different, the procedures following a judge’s disqualification or recusal are the same. In the 82nd Legislative Session (2011), a comprehensive series of procedures was created in Subchapter A-1 of Chapter 29, G.C. These rules, derived from Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 18A, are designed to accommodate all sizes of municipal courts, and strike a balance between uniformity in application of the law and judicial efficiency. They can be used in any kind of criminal or civil case in which a municipal court has jurisdiction.

6. Recusal and Disqualification

Checklist 6-6	Script/Notes
<p>Recusal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A judge must recuse in any proceeding in which:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The judge’s impartiality might reasonably be questioned;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning the subject matter or a party;</p>	<p>T.R.C.P. 18b sets out the law concerning recusal and includes instances in which a judge must step down from hearing a case for reasons other than the disqualifying grounds listed in the constitution. <i>Gaal v. State</i>, 332 S.W.3d 448 (Tex. Crim. App. 2011).</p>

- c. The judge has personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;
- d. The judge or a lawyer with whom the judge previously practiced law has been a material witness concerning the proceeding;
- e. The judge participated as counsel, adviser, or material witness in the matter in controversy, or expressed an opinion concerning the merits of it, while acting as an attorney in government service;
- f. The judge knows that the judge, individually or as a fiduciary, or the judge's spouse or minor child residing in the judge's household has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;
- g. The judge or the judge's spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such a person:
 - (1) Is a party to the proceeding or an officer, director, or trustee of a party;
 - (2) Is known by the judge to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;
 - (3) Is to the judge's knowledge likely to be a material witness in the proceeding; or
- h. The judge or the judge's spouse, or a person within the first degree of relationship to either of them, is acting as a lawyer in the proceeding.

Disqualification:

- 2. No justice or judge shall sit in any case where:
 - a. The judge may be the party injured;
 - b. The judge has been of counsel for the State or the accused; or
 - c. The accused may be connected with the judge by consanguinity or affinity within the third degree.

Art. 30.01, C.C.P.

An individual's relatives within the third degree by consanguinity are the individual's parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, great-grandparent, great-grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew, or niece. Sec. 573.023, G.C. Two individuals are related to each other by affinity if they are married to each other or the spouse of one of the individuals is related by consanguinity to the other individual. Sec. 573.024, G.C.

Recusal or Disqualification Without a Motion:

- 3. If you choose to recuse or disqualify yourself, you are recused or disqualified. Go to step 5.

Sec. 29.055, G.C.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order of Recusal or Disqualification*.

Recusal or Disqualification Upon Party Motion:

- 4. If a motion has been filed to recuse or disqualify you from presiding over the case, you may do one of the following:
 - a. Recuse or disqualify yourself (go to step 3); or
 - b. Decline to recuse or disqualify yourself and request the Regional Presiding Judge of the Administrative Judicial Region to assign a judge to hear the motion; and
 - (1) Forward a referral order, the motion, and statements to the Regional Presiding Judge.

Sec. 29.052, G.C.

Sec. 29.055, G.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order of Recusal or Disqualification*.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order of Referral upon Motion for Recusal or Disqualification*.

- ❑ 5. If you are recused or disqualified, a determination must be made as to who will sit for you in the case.
 - ❑ a. If you are the only municipal judge in the municipality, you must request the Presiding Judge of the Administrative Judicial Region to assign another judge.
 - ❑ b. If you are the presiding municipal judge in the municipality, you must request the Presiding Judge of the Administrative Judicial Region to assign another judge.
 - ❑ c. If you are not the presiding municipal judge in the municipality, you must request the presiding municipal judge of the municipality to assign another judge of the city to hear the case.

Sec. 29.057, G.C.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

7. Requests for Discovery

Michael Morton was wrongfully convicted in 1987 for the murder of his wife, Christine. In 2011, after serving nearly 25 years in prison, he was exonerated. His case brought needed attention to the issues of discovery in criminal cases and prosecutorial misconduct. The Michael Morton Act, passed by the 83rd Legislature (2013), amended the Code of Criminal Procedure to revise provisions relating to discovery in a criminal case. The changes were made in an effort to uphold a defendant’s constitutional right to a defense, minimize the likelihood of wrongful convictions, save thousands in taxpayer dollars, promote an efficient justice system, and improve public safety, all while increasing the public’s confidence in the criminal justice system.

Checklist 6-7	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Requests for discovery are governed by Article 39.14, C.C.P.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Depositions are generally not allowed in criminal proceedings. Depositions for the defendant may be ordered on application and the filing of affidavits “stating facts necessary to constitute a good reason for taking same.” Merely wishing to discover adverse testimony has been held not to constitute “good reason” for deposition of a witness.</p>	<p><i>James v. State</i>, 563 S.W.2d 599 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978); Art. 39.02, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. For defendants represented by counsel, discovery of papers and physical items should:</p>	<p>Art. 39.14, C.C.P. As amended by the Michael Morton Act, Article 39.14, C.C.P. distinguishes defendants from pro se defendants with regard to discovery.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Be produced by the state on timely request by the defendant;</p>	<p>No order from the court is needed. The State must produce discovery upon a timely request from the defendant. Art. 39.14(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Be limited to production for examination, electronic duplication, copying, and photographing;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Not be removed from the possession of the State or inspected outside the presence of the State; and</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Not include work products of the State.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. For pro se defendants, discovery of papers and physical items should:</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(d), C.C.P.</p>

<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Be produced by the State upon an order from the court;</p>	<p>The State is not required to produce discovery without an order from the court as is the case for defendants represented by counsel. Art. 39.14(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Be limited to production for inspection and review;</p>	<p>The State is not required to allow electronic duplication as is the case for defendants represented by counsel. Art. 39.14(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Not be removed from the possession of the State or inspected outside the presence of the State; and</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. If only a portion of a document, item, or information is subject to discovery, the State is not required to produce or permit the inspection of the portion that is not subject to discovery may withhold or redact that portion. On request of the defendant, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether withholding or redaction is justified under this article or other law.</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The State shall inform the defendant that a portion of the document, item, or information has been withheld or redacted;</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. On request of the defendant, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether withholding or redaction is justified under this article or other law.</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. The defendant, the defense attorney, or any agent of the defense attorney may not disclose to a third party any documents, evidence, materials, or witness statements received from the State unless:</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(e), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The court orders disclosure upon a showing of good cause after notice and hearing after considering the security and privacy interests of any victim or witness; or</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(e), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The documents, evidence, materials, or witness statements have already been disclosed.</p>	<p>Art. 39.14(e), C.C.P.</p>

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| <p>☐ 7. The defense attorney or any agent of the defense attorney may allow a defendant, witness, or prospective witness to view information acquired through discovery, but may not allow that person to have copies of the information, other than a copy of the witness’s own statement.</p> | <p>Art. 39.14(f), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>☐ a. Before allowing a person to view a document or witness statement of another, the person possessing the information shall redact the address, telephone number, driver’s license number, social security number, date of birth, and any bank account or other identifying information in the document or statement.</p> | <p>Art. 39.14(f), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>☐ 8. No general right to discovery of inculpatory evidence exists. However, the defendant has the constitutional right to discover “<i>Brady</i>” evidence, or exculpatory evidence, that shows the defendant may not be guilty.</p> | <p><i>Quinones v. State</i>, 592 S.W.2d 933 (Tex. Crim. App. 1980); <i>Brady v. Maryland</i>, 373 U.S. 83 (1963).</p> |
| <p>☐ a. Prosecutors are statutorily required to promptly provide the defense with any exculpatory, impeachment, or mitigating document, item, or information in the possession, custody, or control of the State that tends to negate the guilt of the defendant or would tend to reduce the punishment for the offense charged. This requirement applies upon discovery of such evidence at any time before, during, or after trial. A defendant need not request this information.</p> | <p>Art. 39.14(h) and (k), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>☐ b. Prosecutors also have an ethical duty to provide the defense with both exculpatory and mitigating evidence. A defendant need not request this information.</p> | <p>Rule 3.09, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.</p> |
| <p>☐ 9. If either party so requests, the court may order the parties to disclose the name and address of each person the party may call as a witness at trial. This is generally referred to as a “witness list.” The judge shall specify when witness lists must be disclosed, no later than 20 days before trial.</p> | <p>Art. 39.14(b), C.C.P.</p> |

- ❑ 10. A court may order the defendant to pay costs related to discovery, but the costs may not exceed the charges prescribed by Subchapter F, Chapter 552, G.C.
- ❑ 11. If a conflict exists between the rules of discovery in criminal cases under Art. 39.14, C.C.P., and the rules pertaining to public information under Chapter 552, G.C., the rules of discovery prevail.
- ❑ 12. Parties may agree to discovery and documentation requirements equal to or greater than those required under Art. 39.14, C.C.P.

Subchapter F, Chapter 552, G.C., deals with charges for providing copies of public information.

Art. 39.14(m), C.C.P.

Art. 39.14(n), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

Two motions specifically affect the admission of evidence at trial. The motion to suppress evidence is generally based on constitutional or statutory grounds. On the other hand, the motion in limine is advisory in nature only. This motion provides a way to pre-judge the admissibility of evidence at trial.

8. Motions to Suppress

Checklist 6-8	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The motion to suppress can be used to exclude:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Physical evidence based on police violation of the 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, Art. 38.23, C.C.P., and Art. I, Sec. 10 of the Texas Constitution prohibiting “unreasonable searches or seizures.”</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The court must determine:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Did a search or seizure occur? To be a search, police conduct must engage in physical intrusion of a constitutionally protected area in order to obtain information or intrude upon the defendant’s “reasonable expectation of privacy.” A seizure occurs if a reasonable person would have believed that he was not free to leave;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Did the defendant have an interest in the items or area searched? If not, then the defendant does not have “standing” to complain of the search or seizure; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Is the area private as opposed to open to the public or exposed to the public by the defendant? Open fields, overheard conversations, and items abandoned or relinquished to others may not be protected by the 4th Amendment.</p>	<p>See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 4 for a discussion on the 4th Amendment.</p> <p><i>United States v. Jones</i>, 565 U.S. 40 (2012); <i>Katz v. United States</i>, 389 U.S. 347(1967); <i>Brendlin v. California</i>, 551 U.S. 249 (2007).</p> <p><i>Rakas v. Illinois</i>, 439 U.S. 128 (1978).</p>

- 2. Was seizure pursuant to a warrant?
 - a. Was the warrant valid?
 - b. Was the item seized within the scope of the warrant?

- 3. Was there an exception to the requirement of a warrant?
 - a. Was the seizure in “plain view?”
 - (1) The court must find that the officer was properly in the place where the discovery was made and it was immediately apparent the item was, in fact, evidence.
 - b. Was the search made with consent of the defendant or another person with the right to consent to the search?
 - c. Was the search or seizure only a temporary detention or “frisk” based on reasonable suspicion?
 - d. Was the search of the person or the area within his or her reach incident to a proper arrest?
 - e. Was the search based on an inventory policy of searching a properly seized vehicle?
 - f. Was the seizure or stop based on a valid roadblock or traffic stop?
 - g. Was the search based on emergency or exigent circumstances?

- 4. Has the defendant properly supported the motion to suppress with law and evidence? If so, the court grants the motion to suppress illegally obtained evidence.

- 5. If an illegal search or arrest leads to other evidence it too must be suppressed as “fruit of the poisonous tree.”

See Checklist 2-4

Terry v. Ohio, 392 U.S. 1 (1968).

Mich. Dept. of State Police v. Sitz, 496 U.S. 444 (1990).

Wong Sun v. U.S., 371 U.S. 471 (1963).

- 6. Statements of the accused must be suppressed as violating the defendant’s 5th Amendment right against self-incrimination if:
 - a. The statements were involuntarily made;
 - b. The statements were involuntary due to promises or threats made by the police;
 - c. The statements were made subject to “custodial interrogation” (the defendant must be in legal custody and the statements must be the result of questioning) and the police failed to “Mirandize” the defendant; or
 - d. The statements were made subject to “custodial interrogation” that does not comply with the requirement in Article 38.22, C.C.P., that the entire statement be recorded or in writing with the statutory warnings of that section included in the recording or writing.
 - e. Exceptions to this section include:
 - (1) Any statements that contain any assertions of fact or circumstances which are later found to be true;
 - (2) Prior testimony of the defendant;
 - (3) Statements introduced for the purposes of impeaching the defendant’s testimony at trial; or
 - (4) Statements obtained by federal law enforcement in compliance with federal law or obtained in another state and in compliance with the laws of that state.
 - f. If the defendant raises the issue of voluntariness as stated above, the court must hold a hearing outside the presence of the jury and make findings concerning the voluntariness of the statement.

See *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 4.

Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966).

Art. 38.22, C.C.P.

Art. 38.22, Sec. 8, C.C.P.

- ❑ 7. An in-court identification of a defendant by a witness must be suppressed if the court finds that the identification was based on an improperly suggestive police identification procedure.
 - ❑ a. Police misconduct in this situation must be of such an improper nature that it causes the court to believe that there is a substantial likelihood of irreparable misidentification by the witness.
 - ❑ b. Factors to consider include:
 - ❑ (1) The witness's opportunity to observe the defendant;
 - ❑ (2) Nature of the suggestion;
 - ❑ (3) Whether the in-court identification is based in any way on the improper procedure;
 - ❑ (4) Accuracy of prior description;
 - ❑ (5) Time between the offense and the identification; and
 - ❑ (6) Totality of the circumstances.
- ❑ 8. In the hearing on a motion to suppress, the initial burden of establishing standing (or the right to complain) is upon the defendant. Once standing is established, the burden to show evidence was properly obtained shifts to the State.
- ❑ 9. Hearings on motions to suppress can often turn into a trial of the entire case. The court can and should limit pretrial testimony to only those legal and factual matters that must be developed for a proper ruling on the motion.
 - ❑ a. After entry of judgment and if there is no appeal, the court may proceed to use available collection tools.

See Chapter 10 in this book for appeals information. See Checklist 8-3.

CHAPTER 6 PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS

The motion in limine is a mechanism by which either the prosecutor or defendant may raise issues of the admissibility of evidence prior to trial.

Motions About Evidence

9. Motions in Limine

Checklist 6-9	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. The motion in limine is simply a judicial order that certain evidence be brought before the court outside of the jury’s presence so that it can be ruled on at the proper point in trial. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. This motion is used by counsel and the court to avoid mistrials and trial by ambush. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court as a practical matter should not make final rulings on matters of evidence until those matters are brought before the court in trial. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. The court should, in appropriate circumstances, order that the attorneys not go into certain areas of evidence in front of the jury until opposing counsel has had an opportunity to make objections and the court has had the opportunity to hear arguments and make a proper ruling. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Granting or denying a motion in limine is not a final ruling by the court. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Regardless of the ruling on the motion in limine, counsel must still tender or object to the evidence at trial to preserve an issue for appeal in a court of record. 	<p>A judge can reconsider a ruling on a motion in limine if facts change and evidence becomes admissible.</p>

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

Defendants in municipal courts have a right to appear by counsel as in other cases. Art. 45A.163, C.C.P. When the defendant appears, the court can require the defendant to enter a plea in writing. Art. 45A.151, C.C.P. A defendant who wants the judge to hear the evidence and decide his or her case must waive the right to a jury trial in writing. Art. 45A.155, C.C.P. Unless good cause is shown by the defendant, a municipal court may order a defendant who does not waive a jury trial and who fails to appear for the trial to pay the costs incurred for impaneling the jury. This order is enforced by contempt as prescribed by Section 21.002(c), G.C. See Art. 45A.157, C.C.P.

If the prosecutor is not present when the case is called for trial, the judge may: (1) postpone the trial to a specified date; (2) temporarily appoint any competent attorney to perform duties as an attorney representing the state, notwithstanding Article 2A.104; or (3) proceed to trial. Art. 45A.158, C.C.P. If the judge opts to proceed to trial, the State’s failure to present a prima facie case of the offense alleged in the complaint entitles the defendant to a directed verdict of “not guilty.” Art. 45A.162, C.C.P. In this instance, State’s witnesses, such as the peace officer, may be present at the trial but unable to testify for the State unless called by the prosecutor.

Because procedures for conducting a bench trial differ from a jury trial, there are separate checklists for these procedures.

For more discussion of trial proceedings, see *TMCEC Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 8.

1. The Non-Jury Trial (Bench Trial)

Checklist 7-1	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Opening Ceremony and Remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Opening announcement given by bailiff or court clerk. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Judge’s opening statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Explain court procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The court may want to repeat the admonishments made on first appearance. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Call the case for trial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Prosecution and defense announce ready for trial, make motions for continuance, or present pretrial motions (e.g., motion to suppress). 	<p>“All rise! The Municipal Court of the City of _____ is now in session. The Honorable _____, judge presiding.”</p> <p>See Checklist 4-1.</p> <p>“I call the case of the State of Texas vs. (<i>Defendant’s name</i>).”</p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The prosecutor reads the complaint:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The defendant is entitled to a copy of the complaint at least one day before trial, but the defendant can waive that right.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Ask the defendant if he or she understands the charge and the rights explained earlier. The defendant must be provided a reasonable amount of time to secure counsel. If the defendant does not waive a jury trial in writing, the case must be docketed as a jury trial.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.101, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.155, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Defendant enters a plea:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A judge may not accept a plea of guilty or nolo contendere from a defendant in open court unless it appears to the judge that the defendant is mentally competent and the plea is free and voluntary.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Ask the defendant if he or she waives his or her right to a jury trial, and have the defendant sign a written waiver.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The defendant then enters a plea of:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Guilty;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Nolo contendere (no contest);</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Not guilty; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Special plea (double jeopardy).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. If the defendant refuses to enter a plea, the court must enter a plea of not guilty for the defendant.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. If the defendant pleads guilty or nolo contendere, then the only remaining issue is the amount of the fine, and the court determines the punishment.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.153, C.C.P.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Plea Form: In Person.</p> <p>Art. 45A.152, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.153, C.C.P.
See Checklist 8-1.</p> |

- ❑ 4. Place witnesses under “The Rule.”
 - ❑ a. At the request of either the defense or prosecution, or on your own motion, the court may prevent witnesses from hearing the testimony of other witnesses.
 - ❑ (1) Determine all possible witnesses.
 - ❑ (2) Give oath to witnesses.
 - ❑ (3) Admonish witnesses as to “The Rule.”
 - ❑ b. Before a victim, close relative of a victim, or a guardian of a victim can be excluded under “The Rule,” the moving party must show, and the court must determine that:
 - ❑ (1) The victim (or relative or guardian) will testify; and
 - ❑ (2) The testimony of the witness/victim would be materially affected if the witness/victim is not excluded under The Rule.
 - ❑ c. If either side asks the judge to make an exception for a particular witness (for example, the crime victim or an expert witness), the judge may grant the exception if it is determined that the testimony of the witness will not be tainted or influenced if that person is allowed to remain in the courtroom during the trial and to hear the testimony of the other witnesses in the case.

- ❑ 5. Opening Statements:

Rule 614, T.R.E.

“All those of you who may be witnesses in this case who are now in the courtroom, please stand and raise your right hand.”

“Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give in the case now on trial is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?”

“Members of the jury, ‘The Rule’ has been invoked. ‘The Rule’ means that the witnesses, except the defendant, must remain outside the hearing of the courtroom at all times while testimony is being heard, except when testifying or until discharged. If you are a witness, you must stay close enough so that you may be reached when needed.”

“You must not converse with each other or with any other person about the case, and you are not to read any report of or comment upon the testimony in the case while under ‘The Rule.’ You may, however, discuss the case with attorneys in the case outside the presence of other witnesses. Please remain outside until called.”

For a violation of “The Rule,” contempt may be an option. See *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapter 6.

Art. 36.01(b), C.C.P.

- a. Prosecution first.
 - b. Defense second. (Defense may reserve opening statement until after the State rests its case-in-chief, as long as the defense presents a case.)
 - c. Should the prosecution waive its opening statement, the defense may not make an opening statement until the defense presents its case-in-chief.
6. Presentation of Evidence:
- a. All testimony must be presented under oath.
 - b. Prosecution’s Case:
 - (1) State’s direct evidence.
 - (2) Defendant’s cross-examination.
 - (3) State’s redirect examination.
 - (4) Defendant’s recross-examination.
7. Prosecution rests.
8. Motion for directed verdict:
- a. At this point, the defense is permitted to request a motion for directed verdict of acquittal. The motion is based upon the belief of the defense that the State has failed to present evidence proving each and every element of the offense.
 - b. If the judge believes that the defense is correct, then the judge should return a verdict of not guilty.

“Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give in the case now on trial is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?”

Art. 45A.162, C.C.P.

- c. Granting the motion has the same practical effect of ending the trial in an acquittal. Overruling the motion results in a continuation of the trial, and the defense would then be allowed to present its case.
- 9. Defendant's case:
 - a. Defendant's direct examination.
 - b. State's cross-examination.
 - c. Defendant's redirect examination.
 - d. State's recross-examination.
- 10. Rebuttal evidence, if any. The prosecution may present rebuttal evidence in the same manner as the prosecution's case-in-chief.
- 11. Prosecution closes. If the prosecution presents more evidence, the defense may present more evidence if it chooses.
- 12. Defense closes.
- 13. Closing arguments:
 - a. Prosecution argues first (may waive).
 - b. Defense makes its arguments.
 - c. Prosecution has right to argue last.
 - d. Equal time should be given to each side.
- 14. Decide whether the State proved its case, render judgment orally in open court, and enter the judgment in the docket.
 - a. All persons are presumed to be innocent, and no person may be convicted of an offense unless each element of the offense is proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Art. 45A.251(f), C.C.P.
See the *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book* for a variety of judgment forms.

- ❑ b. If you return a finding of guilty, render judgment by assessing a specific fine amount within the range permitted under the statute or ordinance under which the defendant was prosecuted.

- ❑ c. If the defendant is found guilty, inform the defendant of the right to appeal.

See Chapter 8 in this book for more information on sentencing.

“You have the right to appeal my decision. Appeal is to the county court. In order to appeal this case, you must give notice of appeal and file a bond with this court in the amount of *(calculate and state the amount of twice the fine and costs)* within 10 days of tomorrow’s date.”

The procedure may vary for courts of record.

See Art. 45A.054, C.C.P., for enlargement of time period if bond filed by mail.

See Chapter 10 in this book.

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

2. The Jury Trial – Before Trial

For courts that conduct jury trials infrequently, it is recommended that a pretrial hearing be conducted to ensure that the parties are in agreement on all possible issues and to minimize the risk for procedural surprises during the trial. This is especially important for jury trials involving pro se defendants that may not understand trial processes.

Although courts can carry out many of the following procedures on the day of trial, handling them in advance will achieve a smoother and more efficient trial experience. Under no circumstances should the pretrial process be used as a tool to thwart or discourage defendants from exercising their constitutional right to a trial.

Coordination and agreement (or the court’s ruling) before the day of trial on trial-related issues may assist in eliminating unnecessarily long delays for the jury panel.

Some judges prefer to prepare the jury charge in advance and allow both sides to comment and recommend revisions. The judge, however, has the final decision on the wording. Both sides have a final opportunity to make recommendations or state objections to the charge on the day of trial, but are less likely to do so if given a previous opportunity to respond. The court may not flatly prohibit motions made on the day of trial and after the deadline date, but the court may require the movant to show good cause for not complying with the deadline. Some motions must be ruled upon on the trial day, but some can be decided in advance.

Checklist 7-2	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. If a pretrial hearing was not held, the court may send a “trial packet” to the prosecution and defense containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Copy of complaint; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Copy of draft jury charge; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Date and time of trial; and <input type="checkbox"/> d. Notice setting the deadline for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Filing motions; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Filing subpoena lists; 	<p>Both sides shall be notified if a witness on the subpoena list cannot be located or if documents are not available.</p>

- (3) Filing objections to the complaint;
 - (4) Filing recommendations, or exceptions to the jury charge;
 - (5) Requests for interpreter; or
 - (6) Other motions.
2. Sign an order for the clerk to summon a sufficient number of jurors for the type of case.
- a. Consider summoning 30 to 40 persons for a misdemeanor trial.
 - b. Prospective jurors may be randomly selected from:
 - (1) Driver’s license records, if available;
 - (2) Utility records;
 - (3) Tax rolls; and
 - (4) Voter registration rolls.
 - c. Prospective jurors must live within the city.
3. The court may reschedule prospective jurors to a later date. The clerk may postpone juror’s service if:

Challenges to the complaint need not be considered unless good cause is shown for violating the court’s order to file them timely.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order to Summon Venire*.

Practice Tip: For consistency and transparency, a written policy can be developed and adopted by the court that details the procedure for jury selection (preparing the jury candidate list, summoning the prospective jurors, etc.).

Sec. 62.501, G.C.

Tex. Atty. Gen. Op. GA-0161 (2004).
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Official Model Jury Summons and Questionnaire; Jury Service Cover Letter*.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The person summoned has not been granted a postponement in the county for one year prior to the date on which the juror is summoned to appear; and
<input type="checkbox"/> b. The person and the clerk determine a substitute date on which the person will appear for jury service that is not later than six months after the date on which the person was originally summoned to appear. | Sec. 62.0143, G.C. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Unless the court's criminal case records are accessible on the internet, the clerk of the court must post in a designated public place in the courthouse notice of a criminal docket setting as soon as the court notifies the clerk of the setting. | Art. 17.085, C.C.P. |

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

3. The Jury Trial – Trial Day

Checklist 7-3 begins with calling the jury. Please remember that the court must receive announcements and explain procedures to the pro se defendant, even in a jury trial. Please review Chapters 3 and 4. These actions should not take place in front of the jury. If the defendant waives a jury in writing or pleads guilty and waives a jury in writing, the jury is not necessary.

Checklist 7-3	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Instruct the clerk of the court to prepare a jury list containing the name of each juror in the order in which he or she was chosen.	See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i> : Jury Panel List (Venire Panel).
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Seat jurors in the order in which they were selected.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Distribute a copy of the numbered list of jurors to the prosecutor and the defendant or defense counsel.	Art. 35.11, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> a. The judge may, at his or her discretion, ask each attorney to read and sign an admonishment against distributing juror information contained on the juror information cards to the media.	Generally, juror information may not be disclosed unless permitted by the court after a showing of good cause on application by a party in the trial or a bona fide member of the news media. Art. 35.29, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Verify that an absent juror has not established his or her exemption by filing a signed statement with the clerk of the court prior to the appearance date or been given a postponement by the clerk.	Art. 35.04, C.C.P.; Secs. 62.0142 and 62.0143, G.C.
<input type="checkbox"/> a. If desired, set contempt hearings and issue attachments for missing jurors not exempt.	Art. 45A.156, C.C.P. See Chapter 14 in this book, concerning Contempt. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i> : Show Cause Notice: Juror Contempt. See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i> : Chapter 6.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Opening Ceremony and Remarks:	
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Opening announcements may be given by the bailiff or court clerk.	“All rise! The Municipal Court of the City of _____ is now in session. The Honorable _____, judge presiding.”

☐ 6. Judge's opening remarks.

“Members of the jury, I want to welcome you to the _____ Municipal Court. You have been called for jury duty for this (*day/week*). You will be examined for inclusion on a jury hearing a criminal case. Courtroom hours vary, but are normally from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.”

“Whether you are selected as a juror today or not, you are performing a significant service that only free people can perform. If you are selected, the case will be tried as expediently as possible consistent with justice that requires a careful and correct trial.”

“If selected on the jury, unless instructed otherwise, you will be permitted to separate at recess, for meals, and at night.”

☐ 7. The judge should administer the first jury oath to the array.

Art. 35.02, C.C.P.

“Do each of you solemnly swear that you will make true answers to such questions as may be propounded to you by the court, or under its directions, touching your service and qualifications as a juror (so help you God).”

“The law requires that each of you must possess certain qualifications before you may be considered for service as a juror.”

“There are also certain excuses and exemptions that some of you may wish to claim.”

8. Ask the array the questions shown to the right.

“Except for a failure to register, are you a qualified voter in this city, county, and state under the Constitution and laws of the state?”

“Have you ever been convicted of theft or any felony?”

“Are you under indictment or legal accusation, or on deferred adjudication for theft or any felony?”

“Are you presently insane?” Arts. 35.19 and 35.16(a)(4), C.C.P.

“Are you 18 years of age or older?”

“Are you a resident of the city where this court is located?”

“Are you of sound mind and good moral character?”

“Are you able to read and write the English language?”

“Have you served as a petit juror for six days in the preceding three months in a county court, or six days in the preceding six months in a district court?” Sec. 62.102(6), G.C.

Arts. 35.12, 35.16, and 35.19, C.C.P.

9. Immediately excuse any person whose answer to any one of the above questions is inconsistent with the statutory requirements.

Sec. 62.106, G.C.

10. Determine if anyone who is otherwise qualified to be a juror wishes to claim one of the following legal exemptions:

“You may claim any of the following exemptions if you choose to, but you are not required to claim them.”

“If one of these applies to you, but you still desire to be considered as a juror, please continue to remain seated.”

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The person is 75 years of age or older;</p> | <p>“Are you over 75 years of age or older?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The person has legal custody of a child under the age of 12 years, and jury service would leave the child or children without adequate supervision;</p> | <p>“Do you have legal custody of a child under the age of 12 years and service on a jury at this time would result in the child not receiving adequate supervision?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The person is a student in a public or private secondary school;</p> | <p>“Are you a student in a public or private high school or secondary school?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The person is enrolled and in actual attendance at an institution of higher education;</p> | <p>“Are you enrolled and in actual attendance at a college or community college?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. The person is an officer or employee of the Senate, the House of Representatives, or any department, commission, board, office, or other agency in the legislative branch of State government;</p> | <p>“Are you an officer or employee of the Senate, the House of Representatives, or any department, commission, board, office, or other agency in the legislative branch of State government?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> f. The person is the primary caretaker of a person who is unable to care for himself or herself;</p> | <p>“Are any of you a primary caretaker for a person who is unable to care for himself or herself?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> g. In counties with populations over 200,000, the person has served on a petit jury in the county in the last 24 month period preceding the currently scheduled date for service, unless the county uses a jury plan under Section 62.011, G.C., and the period authorized under Section 62.011(b)(6), G.C., exceeds two years;</p> | <p>Sec. 62.106(a)(6), G.C.</p> <p>“Have you served on a petit jury in this county in the last 24 to 36 months immediately preceding today?”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> h. Unless the jury wheel in the county has been reconstituted after the date the person served as a petit juror, people in counties with a population of at least 250,000 who have served as a petit juror in the county during the 36 month period preceding the date the person is to appear for jury service may claim an exemption; or</p> | <p>Secs. 62.106(a)(8) and 62.106(b), G.C.</p> |

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> i. The person is a member of the U.S. military on active duty deployed away from the person’s home station and county of residence.</p> | <p>Sec. 62.106(a)(9), G.C.</p> <p>“If any of these apply to you and you do not desire to serve as a juror, please come up to the bench at this time.”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. Hear the exemption and rule accordingly.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. An exemption must be claimed in person on the date of service, or before the date of service by filing a signed statement of the ground for exemption with the clerk of the court.</p> | <p>Art. 35.04, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 13. Call forward any juror who wishes to be excused.</p> | <p>Art. 35.03, Sec. 1, C.C.P.</p> <p>“If any of you feel there is a reason why you cannot sit as a juror today, please come up to the bench now and I will hear your excuse.”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 14. The judge may accept or reject any “reasonable” or “sufficient” excuse.</p> | <p>Art. 35.03, Sec. 1, C.C.P.
Sec. 62.110(a), G.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If an excuse is deemed sufficient, the juror may be released, or his or her service may be postponed to another date.</p> | <p>Art. 35.03, Sec. 1, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A juror may be excused for observance of a religious holiday upon completing an affidavit as required by Article 29.012(c), C.C.P.</p> | <p>Art. 35.03, Sec. 3, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15. A juror may not be excused for economic reasons without the consent of the parties.</p> | <p>Sec. 62.110(c), G.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A juror who, without prompting, articulates an inability to listen to testimony and be fair and impartial may be excused.</p> | <p><i>Butler v. State</i>, 830 S.W.2d 125 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992).</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 16. Hear without delay any challenges to the array from either party.</p> | <p>Art. 35.07, C.C.P.</p> <p>“Array” is a term meaning the jury panel as a whole.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The only ground for challenge is that the summoning officer has willfully summoned jurors with a view to securing a conviction or an acquittal.</p> | |

- b. The challenge must be in writing and must set forth the grounds for challenging.
- c. When made by the defendant, it must be supported by the defendant's affidavit or the affidavit of any credible person.
- 17. If the challenge is sustained:
 - a. Discharge the array;
 - b. Order a new array summoned;
 - c. Prohibit the person who summoned or composed the array to bring another array in the case; and
 - d. Have another array brought to the courtroom.
- 18. After the array is qualified, the prosecutor and defendant or defendant's attorney should be permitted to view them for purposes of requesting a jury shuffle.

Art. 35.08, C.C.P.

It may be prudent to reschedule the trial to allow sufficient time to summon another array in an orderly manner. Discuss the new trial date with both parties and seek consensus for the new date.

Put simply, a "jury shuffle" occurs when one of the parties does not like the order in which the jury is seated and wants the panel re-seated in a new order.

A simple way to do this is to write each juror's name on a card, place the cards in a container and mix them up (shuffle) and randomly draw out each card in sequence. The first name drawn is now juror number one; the second name is juror number two, etc., until all names are drawn. The clerk will prepare the new juror list and they will be re-seated in the order drawn.

- 19. The trial judge, on motion of the defendant or his or her attorney, or of the State’s attorney shall cause the names of the jurors to be randomly shuffled. The clerk shall deliver a copy of the new juror list to the State’s attorney and to the defendant or his or her attorney.

Only one shuffle is permissible by law.

- 20. The motion must be made before the State’s voir dire begins.
- 21. After a jury shuffle, seat the panel in the order their names were drawn.
- 22. Seating the Panel:

- a. After considering and determining qualifications, exemptions, and excuses, the remaining jurors should be seated. The panel at this stage should consist of no fewer than 12 persons. This will allow the prosecution and the defense to exercise three strikes each and still have at least six persons available to serve on the jury.

- b. There is no authority for the selection of alternate jurors in municipal court cases.

- 23. Announcement of the Case and Introductions:

- a. Introduce yourself.

- b. Call the case.

- c. Introduce lawyers.

Williams v. State, 719 S.W.2d 573 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986).

Arts 33.01, C.C.P. and 45A.159, C.C.P.

Art. 33.011, C.C.P.

“Good morning. My name is _____, and I am the Judge of the _____ Municipal Court. I will be presiding over this trial.”

“At this time, I call the *State of Texas* vs. _____. What says the State? And the Defense? Members of the jury, allow me to introduce the lawyers in this case.”

“Representing the State in this matter is (*title of state’s attorney*), Mr(s). _____; representing the defendant is Mr(s). _____.” If the defendant is representing himself or herself, see Chapter 3 in this book.

d. Introduce defendant.

“This is a criminal case. It will be tried before six of you selected as the jury. As jurors, it is your exclusive duty to decide all questions of fact in this case, and, for that purpose, to determine the effect, the value, and the weight of the evidence. The evidence in this case will be the testimony you receive and hear from the witness stand and from that place only.”

“You will not be called upon to decide questions of law. It is my duty as judge to rule upon legal matters and to see that this case is tried in accordance with the rules of law.”

“Both the defendant and the people of this state have a right to expect that you will conscientiously consider and weigh the evidence, apply the law given you to that evidence, and that you will reach a just verdict.”

“In this case, as in all cases, the actions of us all—the judge, the attorneys, the witnesses, parties, and jurors—must be according to law: You must therefore follow all instructions given you, as well as others received as the case progresses.”

24. Preliminary instructions:

“Do not mingle with, nor talk to, the lawyers, the witnesses, the parties, or any other person who might be connected with or interested in this case, except of course, for casual greetings. They must follow these same instructions, and you will understand it when they do.”

a. These are the court’s instructions to each juror to follow throughout the trial.

“Do not accept from, nor give to, any of those persons any favors, however slight, such as food, refreshments, or cigarettes.”

- 25. The judge directs the prosecutor and the defense to voir dire. The prosecutor has the right to conduct voir dire first, the defense second.
- 26. Opening voir dire remarks.

“Do not discuss anything about this case, nor mention it to anyone, nor permit anyone to mention it in your presence, until you are discharged as jurors or excused from this case. If anyone attempts to discuss the case with you, report it to me immediately.”

“The parties, through their attorneys, have the right to direct questions to each of you concerning your qualifications, background, attitudes, and experiences.”

“In so questioning, they are not prying into your personal affairs, but are trying to select fair and impartial jurors who will be free from bias or prejudice in this case. If you are selected to serve as a juror, you will be permitted to separate at recesses, unless otherwise instructed by me. Consistent with justice, we will try this case as expediently as possible, but justice requires a careful and correct trial.”

The court will proceed into what is called voir dire (questioning under oath). Art. 35.17, C.C.P.

“Members of the jury panel: The case about to be tried is Cause Number _____, styled *The State of Texas vs. (Defendant)*, who is charged by complaint with the offense of (name of offense). The range of punishment provided for by law for this offense is a fine between \$____ and \$____.”
[In addition, identify other sanctions, if any, that apply upon conviction, such as: community service hours, attendance at an education course, etc.]

- 27. Explain the jury’s function and the role of the judge.

“As the jury panel, you have been seated in the order in which your names were selected using a purely random process. This is done purposely so that no one can “stack” or in any way manipulate who may sit as a juror on any particular case.”

“Some of you may be eliminated because of disqualification.”

“For those that remain, each side will have three peremptory challenges. Peremptory strikes may be exercised for any lawful reason. A peremptory strike removes a name from the list of potential jurors. Each side also has an unlimited number of strikes based upon a variety of legal reasons. The first six names remaining after all the strikes have been made will form the jury for this case.”

“It is the function of the jury to determine the facts. In doing so, you are the sole and exclusive judge of the credibility of the witnesses and the weight to be given their testimony. Even I, as the judge, am not permitted to influence your evaluation through words or actions during the trial. My job is to decide the law and to be certain that both sides receive a fair trial. When I rule on the admissibility of evidence, or hear other objections, I am not indicating my personal feelings for one side or the other, but simply applying rules of law established by the legislature that govern this trial.”

“There are a few general principles of law that I would like to review with you at this time.”

28. Explain who has the burden of proof in a criminal trial.

“The burden of proof in this case rests solely upon the State. The prosecutor must prove each and every element of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt.”

29. Explain the presumption of innocence and touch upon the concept of beyond a reasonable doubt.

“The defendant is presumed to be innocent until guilt is established by legal evidence, received before you in the trial of this case, beyond a reasonable doubt. If, after you retire to deliberate, each of you believes beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty of the offense charged, it will be your duty to return a verdict of ‘Guilty.’ If you have a reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant, it will be your duty to return a verdict of ‘Not Guilty.’”

30. Explain that the defendant is not required to testify in a criminal trial.

“The defendant in any criminal case is not required to prove innocence. If the defendant does not choose to testify, you may not consider that fact as evidence of guilt, nor may you, in your deliberations, comment or in any way allude to that fact.”

31. Explain the purpose of a complaint in a criminal trial.

“The complaint in this case is not an indication of the guilt of the defendant. It is simply the legal means by which a person in Texas is brought to trial in municipal court.”

32. Emphasize the importance of a fair trial.

“The defendant, the prosecutor, the public, and our system of justice, all require that a fair jury, one without bias or prejudice, and free of opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the defendant, be chosen here today. A fair jury is one that, not having heard any of the evidence, is not committed to either side. A fair jury is one that is impartial to both sides and that can and will follow the law as given to it by this court.”

- 33. Explain why the attorneys for each side, or the defendant, if pro se, will question them.

- 34. Allow prosecutor to proceed with his or her voir dire. After prosecutor has finished with voir dire, allow defense to proceed with voir dire.

- 35. After voir dire is completed, allow prosecutor and defense to exercise their peremptory challenges.
 - a. The prosecutor and the defense may each exercise as many as three strikes (that is, ask that a potential juror be excused) without having to explain why the strikes were made unless a *Batson* challenge is raised.

 - b. Each side takes its jury list supplied by the court and marks through as many as three names.

 - c. The two lists are returned to the clerk, who makes a list of the first six names that have not been marked through. Those six persons then take their position in the jury box. The clerk delivers the original list to the judge and gives a copy of the list of six jurors to both the prosecutor and the defendant or the defendant’s attorney.

- 36. Seat and administer oath to jury at the conclusion of the voir dire proceedings.

“In a moment, the attorneys for each side are going to ask each of you some questions. These questions are not meant to pry into your personal affairs, or those of your family. The questions are designed to determine if you can be a fair juror, or whether any bias or prejudice you may have about the law in this case or the facts as they may be presented to you, will prevent you from following your oath as a juror.”

Art. 35.25, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.159, C.C.P. See Checklist 7-4.

Art. 33.01, C.C.P.

It is good practice for the judge to compare the attorney’s strikes with the juror list prepared by the clerk to assure accuracy. The judge will then direct the clerk to prepare the juror list and make a copy for each side.

For instructions for a “pickup jury,” see Art. 45A.156, C.C.P., and *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Other Jurors Summoned (“Pickup Jury”)*.

If there is a *Batson* challenge, see Checklist 7-4.

37. Give oath and preliminary instructions to jury at conclusion of voir dire.

a. Oath.

b. Preliminary instructions.

38. Explain how the trial will proceed.

“Members of the jury, will you please stand, raise your right hand, and be sworn.”

Art. 35.22, C.C.P.

“Each of you do solemnly swear that in the case of the State of Texas against the defendant, you will a true verdict render according to the law and the evidence (so help you God).”

“You may be seated. Members of the jury, by that oath which you took as jurors, you have become officials of this court and active participants in the public administration of justice. It is your duty to listen to and consider the evidence and law in this case and to obey all instructions given you.”

“As an additional instruction, I now instruct you not to discuss this case among yourselves until after you have heard all the evidence and the attorney’s arguments, and until I have sent you to the jury room to deliberate and consider your verdict.”

“We are now ready to proceed.”

“The trial will proceed as follows:”

“The prosecutor may make an opening statement;”

“The defense attorney/ defendant may do so as well, or at a later time;”

“The prosecutor will then offer evidence through witnesses;” and

- 39. Have prosecutor read complaint; take defendant's plea.
 - a. Prosecutor reads complaint, unless defendant waives the right to have the complaint read aloud.
 - b. A judge may not accept a plea of guilty or nolo contendere from a defendant in open court unless it appears to the judge that the defendant is mentally competent and the plea is free and voluntary.
 - c. The defendant then enters a plea of:
 - (1) Guilty;
 - (2) Nolo contendere (no contest); or
 - (3) Not guilty.
 - d. If the defendant refuses to enter a plea, the court must enter a plea of not guilty for the defendant.

“The defense attorney/ defendant may cross-examine each witness.”

“When the prosecutor has finished presenting the State’s case, the defense attorney/defendant may or may not present his or her evidence.”

“The defendant is never required to prove his or her innocence.”

“The prosecutor may cross-examine each defense witness, if any.”

“When the defense is finished presenting its witnesses, the prosecutor may put on rebuttal witnesses, and the defense may then do the same.”

“After the prosecution and the defense have presented their cases, we will hear closing arguments.”

Art. 36.01, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.153, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.151, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.152, C.C.P.

- (1) If the defendant pleads guilty or nolo contendere, then the court determines the punishment.
 - (2) The defendant in a misdemeanor case may be absent and appear by counsel with the consent of the State.
40. Place witnesses under “The Rule.”
- a. At the request of either the defense or prosecution, or on the judge’s own motion, the judge may prevent witnesses from hearing the testimony of other witnesses.
 - b. Determine all witnesses.
 - c. Give oath to witnesses.

Art. 45A.153, C.C.P.

Art. 33.04, C.C.P.

The prosecuting attorney has unrestricted discretion in consenting to defendant’s absence in a jury trial.

“All those of you who may be witnesses in this case who are in the courtroom, please stand and raise your right hand.”

“Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give in the case now on trial is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?”

- d. Instruct the witness in the language of “The Rule.”
 - e. Before a victim, close relative of a victim, or a guardian of a victim can be excluded under “The Rule,” the moving party must show, and the court must determine that:
 - (1) The victim (or relative or guardian) will testify; and
 - (2) The testimony of the witness/victim would be materially affected if the witness/victim is not excluded under “The Rule.”
 - f. If either side asks the judge to make an exception for a particular witness (for example, an expert witness), the judge may grant the exception if determining that the witness’ testimony will not be tainted or influenced if that person is allowed to remain in the courtroom during the trial and to hear the testimony of the other witnesses in the case.
41. Opening statements:
- a. Prosecution opens first.
 - b. Defense opens second or may reserve opening statement until after the State rests its case-in-chief.
 - c. Should the prosecution waive its opening statement, the defense may not make an opening statement until the prosecution concludes its case-in-chief.
42. Presentation of evidence.
- a. Prosecution’s case-in-chief.

Rule 614 of the Rules of Evidence. “‘The Rule’ has been invoked.’ The Rule’ means that the witnesses who are not parties to this case must remain outside the hearing of the courtroom at all times while testimony is being heard, except when testifying or until discharged. If you are a witness, you must stay close enough so that you may be reached when needed. You must not discuss this case among yourselves or allow it to be discussed in your presence except in the presence of your attorney and under the orders of the court. You must not read any report, newspaper article, correspondence, or comment on the testimony in the case while you are under ‘The Rule.’ Please remain outside until called.”

Art. 36.01, C.C.P.

Art. 36.01, C.C.P.

- (1) State's direct evidence.
 - (2) Defendant's cross-examination.
 - (3) State's redirect examination, if any.
 - (4) Defendant's recross-examination, if any.
 - b. State rests.
43. Motion for directed verdict:
- a. At this point, the defense is permitted to bring a motion for directed verdict of acquittal. The motion is based upon the belief of the defense that the State has failed to bring up some evidence on an element of the offense.
 - b. If the court believes that the defense is correct, the judge should instruct the jury to return a verdict of not guilty.
 - (1) Granting the motion has the same practical effect of ending the trial in an acquittal. Overruling the motion results in a continuation of the trial, and the defense would then be allowed to present its case.
44. Defendant's case:
- a. Defendant's direct examination.
 - b. State's cross-examination.
 - c. Defendant's redirect examination, if any.
 - d. State's recross-examination, if any.
45. Rebuttal evidence:
- a. The prosecution may present rebuttal evidence in the same manner as the prosecution's case-in-chief.

Art. 45A.162, C.C.P.

It may prove necessary to clear the jury from the courtroom. Motions for directed verdict are often made and argued outside the presence of the jury.

Art. 36.01, C.C.P.

- ❑ 46. Prosecution closes:
 - ❑ a. If the State presents more evidence, the defense may present more evidence if it chooses.
- ❑ 47. Defense closes.
- ❑ 48. You must give the jury a charge on the law that applies to the case. The charges may be made orally or in writing, except that the charge must be in writing if required by law. Municipal courts of record are required to have a written jury charge. The jury charge must be given before closing arguments.

- ❑ 49. Read the charge to the jury. Do not comment or communicate your views regarding the instructions given by changes in your voice or facial expressions.

Art. 45A.163, C.C.P.

A written charge is preferred by most judges to avoid objections to the oral charge being made in front of the jury. Some judges prepare the charge in advance and provide a copy to the defense and the prosecution for review and objection prior to the trial. This avoids having to review and possibly revise the charge at trial while the jury and others wait. The final version is provided to the prosecution and defense at the trial. See Checklist 7-5.

Art. 36.14, C.C.P.

“At this time, ladies and gentlemen, I will read to you the charge of the court containing the law applicable to this case. In continuing to discharge your responsibilities as jurors, you will continue to observe all the instructions that have previously been given to you. These instructions are given to you because your conduct is subject to review the same as that of the witnesses, parties, attorneys, and myself. If it should be found that you have disregarded any of these instructions, it will be jury misconduct and it may require another trial by another jury.”

- 50. Closing arguments:
 - a. Prosecution argues first (may waive).
 - b. Defense makes its argument.
 - c. Prosecution has the right to argue last.
- 51. Before submitting the case to the jury, determine whether the defendant elected jury sentencing:
 - a. If the defendant elected to have the jury determine punishment, instruct the jury to assess a fine if they find the defendant guilty of the offense.
 - b. If the defendant did not elect the jury to determine punishment, instruct the jury to only render a verdict of “Not Guilty” or “Guilty. If the verdict is “Guilty,” the judge will assess a fine.
- 52. Submit the case to the jury for deliberations:

“If any of you observe one or more of your group violating any of my instructions, you shall immediately warn the violator and caution him or her not to do so again.”

“Please listen carefully as I read the charge to you. The original will be placed on the table in the jury room when you retire to begin your deliberations.”

See Checklist 7-5 on preparing a jury charge.

Arts. 36.07 and 36.08, C.C.P.

Both sides are allotted equal time for closing arguments. If the prosecution chooses to divide their argument, they do not receive additional time.

“If you find the defendant guilty, you must assess a fine. In setting a fine, you must not compromise or set the fine by chance. It must be an amount set by the free opinion of each individual juror within the range allowed by law.”

a. Instruct the jury.

“You must appoint a presiding juror.”

“The verdict must be unanimous.”

“If you find the State did not prove each element of its case and the guilt of the defendant beyond a reasonable doubt, you must return a verdict of ‘Not Guilty.’”

“You will be provided forms to reflect a verdict of either not guilty or guilty. After you have reached your verdict, the presiding juror will complete the appropriate form, sign the form, and notify the bailiff a verdict has been reached.”

“Any communication between the jury and court must be in writing and transmitted by the bailiff.”

“If you cannot reach a verdict within a reasonable time, notify the bailiff of your difficulty or problem.”

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: After Jury Verdict and After Jury Verdict (Juvenile)*. Art. 45A.166, C.C.P

b. Provide the jury with copies of:

(1) Jury charge;

(2) Jury instructions; and

(3) Verdict Forms

53. The verdict.

Art. 45A.166, C.C.P.

a. The judge should see that the verdict is in the proper form (if guilty, the verdict should include assessment of punishment).

b. Read the verdict in open court.

c. Enter the verdict on your docket.

Art. 45A.053, C.C.P.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) If the jury is deadlocked, give an <i>Allen Charge</i>.<input type="checkbox"/> (2) If a verdict cannot be reached and it is improbable that an agreement can be reached, the jury should be discharged and the case tried again. | See Checklist 7-6(5). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 54. Poll jury on request of prosecution or defense. | Art. 37.05, C.C.P. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 55. Discharge jury. | See Chapter 8 in this book. |

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

Parties use peremptory challenges to remove from the jury panel jurors they believe will have an unfavorable bias as a factfinder. Though a party need not state a reason for rejecting jurors when using peremptory challenges, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986), and *J.E.B. v. Alabama ex rel. T.B.*, 511 U.S. 127 (1994), that these challenges cannot be used to strike a juror in a criminal case based solely on his or her race or gender, respectively.

4. The Jury Trial – *Batson* Challenges

Checklist 7-4	Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Hold a hearing upon a timely, specific objection or motion, written or oral, by either the State or the defendant, that the opposing party made a peremptory strike based upon:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Race; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Gender.</p>	<p>The C.C.P. provides relief only to the defendant, but federal courts have expanded the right to challenge to the State.</p> <p>Art. 35.261(a), C.C.P.; <i>Batson v. Kentucky</i>, 476 U.S. 79 (1986); <i>Georgia v. McCollum</i>, 505 U.S. 42 (1993).</p> <p><i>J.E.B. v. Alabama ex rel T.B.</i>, 511 U.S. 127 (1994).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The motion is timely so long as it is made before the jury is impaneled and sworn.</p>	<p><i>Hill v. State</i>, 827 S.W.2d 860 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Subsequent proceedings are public and should be held in the courtroom.</p>	<p><i>Salazar v. State</i>, 795 S.W.2d 187 (Tex. Crim. App. 1990).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Administer the witness oath to both the prosecutor and defense attorney.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. A <i>prima facie</i> case of racial or gender-based discrimination consists of a showing that the opposing party:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Struck all venire members of the same race or gender; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Struck a disproportionate number of venire members of one race or gender.</p>	<p><i>Salazar v. State</i>, 795 S.W.2d 187 (Tex. Crim. App. 1990).</p> <p><i>Linscomb v. State</i>, 829 S.W.2d 164 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. The party against whom the objection or motion is made is then permitted to offer a reasonable race or gender-neutral explanation for the strike(s).</p>	

☐ 7. If the party against whom the objection or motion is made fails to offer a reasonable race or gender-neutral reason, the objecting party’s burden is met.

Williams v. State, 767 S.W.2d 872 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1989, no pet.).

☐ 8. If the party against whom the objection or motion is made offers a reasonable race or gender-neutral explanation, the objecting party has the burden of persuading the judge by a preponderance of the evidence that the allegations of purposeful discrimination are true.

Tompkins v. State, 774 S.W.2d 195 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987).

☐ a. The objecting party may call witnesses, including opposing counsel.

Williams v. State, 767 S.W.2d 872 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1989, no pet.).

☐ b. The objecting party’s counsel is entitled to examine opposing counsel’s notes for purposes of cross-examination.

Salazar v. State, 795 S.W.2d 187 (Tex. Crim. App. 1990).

☐ c. Objecting counsel may also testify as to what occurred during voir dire.

Prosper v. State, 788 S.W.2d 625 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th] 1990, no pet.).

☐ 9. The trial judge must evaluate the reasons given in light of the circumstances of the trial and decide whether the explanations are valid or a pretext:

☐ a. In reviewing the rationale for strikes, the judge should look at:

☐ (1) Reasons given not related to facts given;

☐ (2) Lack of questions or meaningful questions;

☐ (3) Disparate treatment of prospective jurors;

☐ (4) Disparate questioning to exclude jurors; and

☐ (5) Bias toward a group or profession where the trait is not shown to apply.

☐ b. Reasons held to be racially neutral include but are not limited to:

- (1) Juror has family members with criminal problems;
 - (2) Juror has family member in the penitentiary;
 - (3) Juror has a criminal history;
 - (4) Juror previously served on a hung jury; and
 - (5) Juror previously served on a jury that acquitted.
10. The judge should, but is not required to, make findings of fact and conclusions of law.
11. If purposeful discrimination is found, the judge is not required to dismiss the venire, call another, and begin jury selection again. The judge may fashion any remedy the judge deems appropriate consistent with *Batson* and its progeny:
- a. Consider for example:
 - (1) Calling a new jury array under Art. 35.261, C.C.P.; or
 - (2) Seating the struck venire person.

Lewis v. State, 779 S.W.2d 449 (Tex. App.—Tyler 1989, pet. ref'd).

State ex rel Curry v. Bowman, 885 S.W.2d. 421 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993).

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

In a jury trial, the jury determines questions of fact while the judge determines questions of law. Despite having such an important role in deciding a defendant’s criminal liability, jurors often do not fully understand what they are to properly consider in determining fact questions. Jury charges narrow the scope of considerations to be made by the jury to relevant and nonprejudicial matters.

5. The Jury Trial – Jury Charge

Checklist 7-5	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The judge must charge the jury before either the defense or prosecution presents closing arguments. The charge may be made orally or in writing. However, the charge must be in writing if required by law:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Delete any allegations of alternative means of committing the offense for which no evidence was presented.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Obtain a copy of the complaint and statute or ordinance alleged to be violated.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Request submission of any specially requested charges by the parties and make a ruling on each.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. Give each party a reasonable time to inspect and object to the charge intended to be given.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Caption:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Insert the:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Cause number;</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Court; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Defendant’s name.</p>	<p>Art. 45.033/45A.162, C.C.P.</p> <p>A written jury charge is specifically required in municipal courts of record. Art. 36.14, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 36.14, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 36.14, C.C.P.</p> <p>CAUSE NUMBER _____</p> <p>THE STATE OF TEXAS</p> <p>§ IN THE MUNICIPAL § COURT OF § <i>(City) § (County)</i>, TEXAS</p> <p>CHARGE TO THE JURY</p>

3. Commencement:

a. Insert the:

- (1) Name of the offense;
- (2) Name of the city;
- (3) Date of the offense; and
- (4) Defendant's plea.

4. Abstract Charge:

- a. Describe the offense as specifically as possible from the statute and complaint.
- b. Consider quoting verbatim actual statutory language applicable.

5. Definitions:

- a. Define the culpable mental state, if any.

MEMBERS OF THE JURY:

The defendant, (*name as appearing on the complaint*), is charged with the offense of _____ alleged to have been committed in the City of (*municipality*), (*county*), Texas, on or about the ____ day of _____, 20___. To this charge the defendant has pled not guilty. You are instructed that the law applicable to this case is as follows:

E.g., a person commits the offense of assault if the person intentionally or knowingly causes physical contact with another when the person knows or should reasonably believe that the other will regard the contact as offensive or provocative.

E.g., a person acts intentionally or with intent, with respect to the nature of his or her conduct or to a result of his or her conduct, when it is his or her conscious objective or desire to engage in the conduct or cause the result.

- b. Define any terms which are defined in the code or statute.
- c. Reasonable Doubt.

6. Application Paragraph:

- a. Incorporate complaint or statutory language to include all elements of offense.
- b. Delete any manner or means of committing the offense not supported by evidence.
- c. Change conjunctive pleadings (“and”) to disjunctive (“or”) where applicable.
- d. Apply law without commenting on weight of evidence.

7. Converse charge:

- a. Insert the converse charge.

The six paragraphs previously required by *Geesa v. State*, 820 S.W.2d 154 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991) are no longer required under the holding of *Paulson v. State*, 28 S.W.3d 570 (Tex. Crim. App. 2000).

E.g., if you believe from the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant, (name of defendant), on or about (date alleged in the complaint), in the City of _____, Texas, did then and there intentionally or knowingly cause physical contact with (name of victim/complainant), by (set out facts alleged in complaint), when the defendant knew or should have reasonably believed that the said (name of victim/ complainant) would regard the contact as offensive or provocative, you will find the defendant guilty of the offense of assault by contact.

But if you do not so believe or if you have a reasonable doubt thereof, you will acquit the defendant and say by your verdict not guilty.

8. Evidentiary instructions:

- a. If evidence has been admitted for a limited purpose such as to impeach a witness, add an instruction to limit the jury's consideration to the purpose for which it was offered.
- b. If there is a fact issue as to admissibility of evidence or a confession because of illegality in the way it was obtained, submit it to the jury if requested by the defendant.

9. Defenses:

- a. If evidence from any source establishes a defense, instruct the jury on the law and the requirement to acquit if the State fails to disprove the defense evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.
- b. If evidence from any source establishes an affirmative defense, instruct the jury on the law and the requirement to acquit if defendant proves the defense by a preponderance of the evidence.

10. Presumptions:

E.g., You are instructed that certain evidence was admitted before you in regard to the defendant having been charged and convicted of an offense or offenses, other than the one for which the defendant is now on trial. Such evidence cannot be considered by you against the defendant as any evidence of guilt in this case. The evidence was admitted for the purpose of aiding you, if it does, in passing upon the credibility of the defendant as a witness in this case, and to aid you, if it does, in deciding on the weight you will give to the defendant's testimony, and you will not consider it for any other purpose. Arts. 38.22 and 38.23, C.C.P.

- a. Add any evidentiary presumption authorized by law.
- b. Include the general instructions relating to presumptions found in Section 2.05, P.C.

The jury is instructed relative to this presumption:

(1) that the facts giving rise to the presumption must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt;

(2) that if such facts are proven beyond a reasonable doubt the jury may find that the element of the offense sought to be presumed exists, but it is not bound to so find;

(3) that even though the jury may find the existence of such element, the State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt each of the other elements of the offense charged; and

(4) that if the jury has a reasonable doubt as to the existence of a fact or facts giving rise to the presumption, the presumption fails and the jury shall not consider the presumption for any purpose.

- 11. Range of punishment:

An individual adjudged guilty of _____ shall be punished by a fine not to exceed _____ dollars [or] by a fine of not less than \$ _____ nor more than \$ _____. Therefore, if you find the defendant guilty you shall assess punishment by a fine not to exceed _____ dollars [and not less than \$ _____].

- a. Instruct on the range of punishment for every offense if defendant elected jury to assess punishment.

- ❑ 12. General instructions:
 - ❑ a. Add general instructions.

“You are instructed that the criminal complaint is not evidence of guilt. It is the means whereby a defendant is brought to trial in a misdemeanor prosecution. It is not evidence, nor can it be considered by you in passing upon the innocence or guilt of this defendant.”

“During your deliberations in this case, you must not consider, discuss or relate any matters not in evidence before you. You should not consider or mention any personal knowledge or information you may have about any fact or person connected with this case which is not shown by the evidence.”

“After you have retired to your jury room, you should select one of your members as your presiding juror. It is the presiding juror’s duty to preside at your deliberations, vote with you, and when you have unanimously agreed upon a verdict, to certify to your verdict by signing the same as presiding juror.”

“You are the exclusive judges of the facts proved, of the credibility of the witnesses, and of the weight to be given to the evidence, but you are bound to receive the law from the court, which is herein given to you, and be governed thereby.”

- b. If the defendant elected that the jury assess punishment, explain how to arrive at punishment.

13. Verdict Form:

- a. Prepare the verdict form on a separate page and include it with the charge.

“A form for your verdict is attached; your verdict must be in writing and signed by your presiding juror. In deliberating on the punishment in this case, you must not refer to or discuss any matter not in evidence before you. You must not arrive at the punishment to be assessed by any lot or chance, or by putting down any figures or doing any dividing.”

“Your verdict must be unanimous.

“You are the exclusive judges of the facts proved, of the credibility of the witnesses and of the weight to be given to their testimony, but you are bound to receive the law from the court which is herein given you, and be governed thereby.”

CAUSE NUMBER _____

THE STATE OF TEXAS

§ IN THE MUNICIPAL
COURT OF

§ (City)

§ (County), TEXAS

VERDICT

(Choose one of the following)

We, the Jury, find the defendant not guilty.

Presiding Juror

- b. If defendant elected to have the jury assess punishment, include a punishment section on verdict form.

We, the Jury, find the defendant guilty, and assess a fine of \$ _____.

Presiding Juror

- 14. Objections to the main charge:
 - a. Allow each party to make objections to the charge.
- 15. Make any needed changes to the charge:
 - a. Do not indicate in the charge which party requested the instruction.
- 16. Read the charge to the jury.

- ❑ 5. If the jury is deadlocked and cannot reach a verdict, the court may give an “*Allen Charge*” or “*Dynamite Charge*.”
 - ❑ a. Read the charge to the jury and give the charge to them in writing to take to the jury room along with the original instructions.

An “*Allen*” charge is one given to a deadlocked jury which indicates to a juror that some deference is owed to the opinion of the majority of the other jurors. *Allen v. United States*, 164 U.S. 492 (1896).

“While undoubtedly, members of the jury, the verdict of a jury should represent the opinion of each individual juror, it by no means follows that opinions may not be changed by conference in the jury room. The very object of the jury system is to secure unanimity by comparison of views and by arguments among the jurors themselves. Every juror should listen with deference to the arguments of the other jurors, and with a distrust of the juror’s judgment if the juror finds the larger majority of the jury takes a different view of the case than that which the juror takes. No juror should go to the jury room with a blind determination that the verdict should represent the juror’s opinion of the case at that moment or that the juror should close the juror’s eyes to the arguments of the other jurors, who are equally honest and intelligent.”

“So I charge that although the law requires the considered verdict of each individual juror and not a mere acquiescence in the conclusion of the juror’s fellows, you should examine the questions submitted with candor and with a proper regard and deference to the opinions of each other.”

- 6. If a verdict is returned, read it in open court.
- 7. Poll the jury on request of the prosecution or defense.
- 8. If jury cannot agree, it may be discharged:
 - a. When both parties consent to its discharge; or
 - b. When the court believes that the jury has been kept together for such time as to render it altogether improbable that it can agree.

“Now, it is your duty to decide this case, if you can conscientiously do so. No juror is expected to do violence to the juror’s own conscience. You should listen with a disposition to be convinced of each other’s arguments. If a much larger number are for conviction, a dissenting juror should consider whether the juror’s doubt is a reasonable doubt, which made no impression upon the minds of so many people equally honest and intelligent.”

“If, on the other hand, a majority of you are for acquittal, the minority ought to ask themselves whether they might not reasonably doubt the correctness of a judgment which was not concurred in by the majority.”

“Having given you these additional instructions, it is my hope that you will return to the jury room and endeavor to reach a verdict. And with these instructions in mind, I am now going to ask you to return to the jury room and consider further your verdict.”

Art. 37.05, C.C.P.

Art. 36.31, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 7 TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

7. The Jury Trial - Master Checklist

Checklist 7-7	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Defendant requests trial by jury (or refuses to waive right to trial by jury in writing). <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Set pretrial hearing date or trial date if no pretrial hearing. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Issue orders to summon jury panel. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Call case for announcements and admonishments to defendant. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Qualify and swear the central jury panel, if a central jury panel system is used. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Swear the jury panel. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Qualify the jury panel. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Seat the panel in the courtroom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Shuffle the panel if either side requests it. Only one shuffle is permitted. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. If requested by either party, order the official court reporter to transcribe the voir dire. (Only applicable for courts of record.) <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Introductions and administration of the juror oath. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Opening remarks by the court. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Permit the prosecutor to voir dire the panel. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Permit the defendant or, if represented by counsel, the defendant’s attorney to voir dire the panel. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Direct the parties to make their peremptory strikes (rule on challenges for cause, if any). <input type="checkbox"/> 15. The jury is the first six of those left. 	<p>See Chapter 6 in this book.</p>

- 16. If requested, hold a hearing on the discriminatory use of peremptory challenges.
- 17. Seat the jury and administer the oath.
- 18. Take defendant’s plea.
- 19. At the request of either the defense or prosecution, or on your own motion, you should determine all possible witnesses.
 - a. Invoke “The Rule” if requested.
- 20. Opening statements:
 - a. Prosecution first.
 - b. Defense second, but may reserve opening statement until after the State rests its case-in-chief.
 - c. Should the prosecution waive its opening statement, the defense may not make an opening statement until the prosecution concludes its case-in-chief.
- 21. Prosecution’s case-in-chief:
 - a. State’s direct evidence.
 - b. Defendant’s cross-examination.
 - c. State’s redirect examination, if any.
 - d. Defendant’s recross-examination, if any.
 - e. State rests.
- 22. Motion for directed verdict.
 - a. If the state fails to prove a prima facie case of the offense alleged in the complaint, the defendant is entitled to a directed verdict of “not guilty.”

Art. 45A.162, C.C.P.

- 23. Defendant's case:
 - a. Defendant's direct examination.
 - b. State's cross-examination.
 - c. Defendant's redirect examination, if any.
 - d. State's recross-examination, if any.
 - e. Defendant rests.
- 24. Rebuttal evidence: The prosecution may present rebuttal evidence in the same manner as the prosecution's case-in-chief.
- 25. Prosecution closes. The defense may present rebuttal evidence if the prosecution did so.
- 26. Defense closes.
- 27. Provide a charge to the jury and a copy to prosecution and defense.
- 28. Read the charge to the jury.
- 29. Closing arguments:
 - a. Prosecution argues first (may waive).
 - b. Defense makes its argument.
 - c. Prosecution has the right to argue last.
 - d. Both sides are given equal time.
- 30. Submit case to the jury for deliberations.
- 31. Verdict:
 - a. You should see that the verdict is in the proper form (if guilty, the verdict should include assessment of punishment) and read it in open court.
 - b. Enter the verdict on your docket.

☐ c. If a verdict cannot be reached and it is improbable that an agreement can be reached, the jury should be discharged and the case tried again.

☐ 32. Motion for new trial.

☐ 33. Appeal

If the defendant is found guilty, the judge should inform the defendant of the right to appeal. The defendant is not required to give notice in open court. However, the notice of appeal and appeal bond must be filed within 10 days of rendition of judgment.

See Chapter 10 in this book.

Procedures for appeal differ for municipal courts of record and non-record municipal courts. See Chapter 10 in this book.

CHAPTER 8 SENTENCING, DEFERRED DISPOSITION, AND INDIGENCE

1. Sentencing

Municipal courts have jurisdiction over Class C misdemeanors. Under Sections 12.23 and 12.41(3) of the Penal Code, Class C misdemeanors are criminal offenses for which the sentence entails the imposition of a fine as punishment. After a finding of guilt, municipal judges impose the fine in the judgment as a sentence.

Checklist 8-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. After entry of a guilty or nolo contendere plea or a determination of guilt at a bench trial or jury trial:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Find defendant guilty.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The judge may take testimony or evidence, but is not required to do so:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. This proceeding may be ex parte. The State may be heard, but the presence of a prosecutor is not required after a plea of guilty.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. If the court accepts evidence or testimony, it should be under oath.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. The court should not deviate from its obligations to remain fair and impartial.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Judge should consult the controlling statute or ordinance to determine the range of punishment.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Judge should set a fine within the range of punishment. The judge is required to consider the entire range of punishment and is prohibited from imposing a pre-determined sentence. This is rendering sentence.</p>	<p>You may not accept a plea of guilty or nolo contendere in open court unless it appears that the defendant is mentally competent, and the plea is free and voluntary. Art. 45A.152, C.C.P.</p> <p>“You are found guilty of the offense of _____.”</p> <p>Canon 3, Code of Judicial Conduct</p> <p>“I am setting your fine in the amount of \$_____.”</p>

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|---|--|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the defendant entered a plea in open court, the judge shall inquire either during or immediately after the imposition of the sentence whether the defendant has sufficient resources or income to immediately pay all or part of the fine and costs.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.252, C.C.P.
This includes when a defendant enters a plea prior to the commencement of trial.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Make any determination necessary to court costs.</p> | <p>“Your court costs are a total of \$_____.”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. If the court believes deferred disposition is appropriate, go to Checklist 8-2 and skip the rest of this list.</p> | <p>Chapter 45A, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. If the defendant is under the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services or in extended foster care, the judge may not require the defendant to pay any amount of fine and costs. In lieu of payment, the judge may require the defendant to perform community service under Arts. 45A.254 and 45A.459-45A.460, C.C.P.</p> | <p>45A.253(d), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. If the judge determines that the defendant does not have sufficient resources or income to immediately pay all or part of the fine and costs, determine whether the fine and costs should be:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Paid at some later date or in a specified portion at designated intervals;</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Discharged by performing community service;</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Waived in full or in part; or</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. Satisfied through any combination of a-c above.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.252(b), C.C.P.
See Checklist 8-3 for determining sufficient resources or income to pay.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 9. The court may order the fine and costs paid in the following manners:</p> | <p>Art. 45A.251, C.C.P.</p> |

- a. The entire fine and costs when sentence is pronounced;

If you determine that the defendant is unable to immediately pay the fine and costs, you must allow the defendant to pay in specified portions at designated intervals. Art. 45A.253, C.C.P.

This does not preclude community service per Article 45A.254, C.C.P., or waiver of fines and costs per Article 45A.257, C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Installment Agreement; and Schedule of Payments for Installment Agreement.

- b. The entire fine and costs at some later date; or

“You will pay the total amount of \$(fine and costs) immediately.”

“You will pay the total amount of \$(fine and costs) on or before (date).”

- c. A specified portion of the fine and costs at designated intervals.

“You will pay the amount of \$(payment) on or before (date) and payments of \$(installment) each (installment period) until the total amount of \$(fine and costs) is paid.”

A time payment reimbursement fee must be paid if the total fine and costs are not paid before the 31st day after judgment. Art 102.030, C.C.P.

For more information on payment plans, see Checklist 8-3.

- 10. The court should impose orders authorized or required by law.

Art. 45A.251(b)(3), C.C.P. For special sanctions allowed and required in juvenile cases, see Chapter 13.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. The court, if applicable, may direct the defendant to pay restitution to any victim of the offense. In instances involving passing a bad check, restitution is limited to \$5,000.</p> | <p>Art.45A.251(b)(2) and (c), C.C.P.
A victim is any person who suffers loss as a direct result of the criminal offense. <i>Hanna v. State</i>, 426 S.W.3d 87 (Tex. Crim. App. 2014).</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. If the defendant has been placed in jail on the charge, the court must calculate jail credit:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Court must determine the period of time that must be served to get credit. The period can be no less than eight hours nor more than 24 hours.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Each period earns not less than \$150 in credit against the fine and costs for each period served.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Credit must be given for all time in jail in said cause prior to sentence in each cause even when the effect is the defendant receives multiple jail credits.</p> | <p>Arts. 45A.251(d), and 45A.262 C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.262(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.262(a)(2), C.C.P. The credit amount of \$150 per period served applies to a defendant who is placed in jail for failure to pay.</p> <p>Ex parte Hannington, 832 S.W.2d 355 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992).</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 13. In addition to jail credit above, the judge shall credit the defendant \$150 each day for any time the defendant was confined in jail or prison while awaiting trial or serving a sentence for another offense if the confinement occurred after the commission of the misdemeanor for which the defendant is now being sentenced.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.251(e), C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 14. The court must enter a written judgment signed by the trial judge reflecting the sentence and terms rendered above.</p> | <p>Art. 42.01, Sec. 1, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15. A copy of the judgment should be provided to the defendant.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 16. Advise of right to appeal.</p> | |

CHAPTER 8 SENTENCING, DEFERRED DISPOSITION, AND INDIGENCE

2. Deferred Disposition, Subchapter G, Chapter 45A, C.C.P.

Deferred disposition is a form of probation used by municipal and justice courts that can last up to 180 days. Granting deferred disposition is within the court’s discretion. It is not mandatory. For more information about deferred disposition, see “Deferred Disposition is Not Deferred Adjudication,” *The Recorder*, (August 2002).

Checklist 8-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Determine that deferred disposition is available for the alleged offense. It is not available for:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Traffic offenses committed in a construction or maintenance work zone when workers are present;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Violation of a state law or local ordinance relating to “motor vehicle control,” other than a parking violation committed by a person who holds a commercial driver’s license or held a commercial driver’s license at the time of the offense; or</p>	<p>Art. 45A.301(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.301(2), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Deferred disposition may be granted:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. After defendant pleads guilty or no contest; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. After a finding of guilt by judge or jury.</p>	<p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Deferred Disposition Order</i>.</p> <p>The plea may be oral or written.</p> <p>Deferred disposition may be granted at the defendant’s request, the prosecutor’s suggestion, or the court’s own motion.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Set a fine.</p>	<p>The court must set a fine when granting deferred disposition, even though the case may be dismissed later.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Assess court costs. Unless waived under Art. 45A.257(b), defendant must pay court costs:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. At the time the deferred disposition is granted or ordered; or,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Alternatively, notwithstanding any other provision of law;</p>	<p>Art. 45A.302(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.303(a), C.C.P.</p>

- (1) in installments during the probation period;
- (2) by performing community service, if eligible, under Article 45A.254, C.C.P., if:
 - (A) Defendant failed to pay previously assessed fine or cost; or
 - (B) Defendant is determined by the court to have insufficient resources or income to pay fine or costs;
 - (i) by performing community service, if defendant is younger than 17 years, under Article 45A.459, C.C.P.;
 - (ii) by performing tutoring, if defendant is younger than 17 years of age and the offense occurred in a building or on the grounds of the primary or secondary school at which the defendant was enrolled at the time of the offense, under Article 45A.460, C.C.P.; or
 - (iii) through a combination of the alternatives described above.
- 5. Defer the proceedings for a period of time not to exceed 180 days.
- 6. Set any or all of the following conditions to be performed by the defendant during the deferral period, which may include:
 - a. Post bond in amount of the fine to secure payment of the fine;
 - b. Require payment of restitution to victim;
 - c. Go to professional counseling;

Alternatives should be incorporated as conditions of the deferred disposition order. See Checkbox 6 below.

Restitution under the deferred statute may not be more than the fine assessed.

- d. Submit to alcohol or drug testing;
- e. Submit to psychosocial assessment;
- f. Successfully complete an alcohol awareness or substance misuse treatment or education program, such as:
 - (1) A substance misuse education program approved by the Department of State Health Services in accordance with Sec. 521.374(a)(1), T.C., that is regulated by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation under Chapter 171, G.C.; or
 - (2) An alcohol awareness program described by Sec. 106.115, A.B.C., that is regulated by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation under Chapter 171, G.C.
- g. Pay as reimbursement fees the costs of any diagnostic testing, psychosocial assessment, or participation in a treatment or education program either directly or through the court;
- h. Complete a driving safety course or other course;
- i. Present the court with proof of compliance with any required conditions;
- j. Comply with any other reasonable conditions;

If the offense is a “traffic offense classified as a moving violation” and the defendant is younger than age 25, the judge shall require as a condition of deferred disposition that the defendant complete a driving safety course. See Checkbox “m” below.

Community service and committing no further offenses are examples of “other reasonable conditions.”

<p><input type="checkbox"/> k. If the offense is Public Intoxication, Purchase, Attempt to Purchase, Consumption, or Possession of Alcohol by a Minor; Misrepresentation of Age by a Minor; or Driving or Operating Watercraft Under the Influence of Alcohol by a Minor, the court must require as a condition of deferred disposition that the minor successfully complete an alcohol awareness program approved by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, or a substance misuse education program under Section 521.374, T.C.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.115(a), A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> l. If the offense is Purchase, Attempt to Purchase, Consumption, or Possession of Alcohol by a Minor; or Misrepresentation of Age by a Minor; the court must require as a condition of deferred disposition that the minor performs eight to 12 hours of community service for a first offense and 20 to 40 hours of community service for a subsequent offense; and/or</p>	<p>Mandatory community service must be related to education about or prevention of misuse of alcohol or drugs, as applicable. If programs or services providing the education are not available, the court may order community service that it considers appropriate for rehabilitative purposes. Sec. 106.071(e), A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> m. If the offense is a “traffic offense classified as a moving violation” and the defendant is younger than age 25:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) The judge shall require as a condition of deferred disposition that the defendant complete a driving safety course; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) If the defendant holds a provisional license, during the deferral period, the judge shall require that the defendant be examined by the DPS.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.304(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Sec. 521.161(b)(2), T.C. Persons under age 18 hold provisional licenses under Sec. 521.123, T.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. Inform the defendant:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. When all the conditions are met, the case will be dismissed at the end of the deferral period. Otherwise the court will enter a judgment, and the fine will be due; and</p>	<p>Give the defendant a written copy of the order deferring disposition, listing all the conditions, and the consequences of both successful and unsuccessful compliance.</p>

- b. Whether a special expense fee is imposed.
 - (1) The judge may impose a special expense fee on the defendant not to exceed the amount of the fine that could be imposed as punishment for the offense.
 - (2) The fee may be collected at any time before the end of the probation period.
 - (3) The judge may elect not to impose the fee for good cause shown.
 - (4) If the judge orders collection of a fee, it must be credited in the event of default by the defendant toward the payment of the amount of the fine imposed by the judge as punishment for offense on conviction.

- 8. At the end of the deferral period:
 - a. If the defendant presents satisfactory evidence of compliance with the requirements, then dismiss the case.
 - b. If the defendant fails to provide proof of compliance within the deferred period:
 - (1) The court must set the matter for a show cause hearing
 - (2) The court must provide notice in writing of the defendant's opportunity to show cause. The notice shall be mailed to either the address on file with the court or the address that appeared on the citation.

Art. 45A.302(b), C.C.P.

- (3) The court shall require the defendant to appear at the time and place stated in the notice and show cause why the deferral should not be revoked.
- (4) At the show cause hearing on the defendant's showing of good cause for failure to present satisfactory evidence of compliance with the requirements of the deferred order, the court may allow an additional period during which the defendant may present evidence of the defendant's compliance with the order's requirements..
- (5) After a show cause hearing the judge may either:
 - (A) impose the fine originally suspended pending the deferral period; or
 - (B) impose the lesser fine (except in instances involving defendants younger than 25 years of age involving traffic offenses classified a moving violations; court shall impose the original fine assessed.

Art. 45A.307, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.307(b), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 8 SENTENCING, DEFERRED DISPOSITION, AND INDIGENCE

3. Indigence and Ability to Pay

In certain instances, judges are required to determine whether a defendant is able to pay the fine and costs assessed in a case. In Class C misdemeanor cases, this determination is required (1) at the time of judgment, (2) upon a default in the discharge of the judgment, and (3) before commitment to jail. The 85th Legislature made significant changes requiring judges to make an inquiry regarding the ability to pay fine and court costs for defendants who enter a plea in open court during or immediately after sentencing. This new inquiry is outlined in Checklist 8-1.

Whether or not a particular defendant is able to pay the fine and costs is a complex determination involving numerous factors that widely vary depending on where a defendant lives, especially in a state as large and diverse as Texas. The U.S. Supreme Court has made no attempt to define indigence, leaving that duty to state legislatures. Texas statutes like Articles 45A.252, 45A.261, and 45A.254-45A.255 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provide judicial discretion in determining whether a defendant is indigent without defining indigence.

The 78th Legislature defined “indigent” to mean “an individual who earns not more than 125 percent of the income standard established by applicable federal poverty guidelines” under Sec. 133.002, L.G.C. The TMCEC application form for time payment, extensions, or community service asks that the defendant note any federal programs that he or she is eligible for and is receiving assistance from. The court should consider this information in combination with all relevant facts regarding the defendant’s ability to pay a fine and costs.

Checklist 8-3	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Defendant enters plea in open court or raises indigence or inability to pay.</p>	<p>A person who is unable to pay a fine must be provided an alternative means of discharging the fine other than incarceration under the equal protection clause. The policy of “pay or lay” was found to violate the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. <i>Tate v. Short</i>, 401 U.S. 395 (1971).</p> <p>See Chapter 5, Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System for more information on Judgments, Indigence, and Enforcement.</p>

2. Give the defendant a financial information sheet.

See TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Application for Time Payment, Extension, Community Service, or Waiver.

“Please complete a financial information form.”

3. Have the defendant swear to or affirm information on the sheet:

After defendant completes form, have defendant sign under oath.

“Do you swear (affirm) that the information that you have provided in this document is true and correct?”

a. Place the defendant under oath to present testimony about financial condition.

“I’m going to place you under oath before conducting this indigence hearing and reviewing your financial information sheet. Please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in this matter pending before the court?”

4. Consider the defendant’s income and resources:

Except as otherwise specifically provided, in determining a defendant’s ability to pay for any purpose, the court shall consider only the defendant’s present ability to pay. Art. 1.053, C.C.P.

a. Amount of income;

b. Source of income:

(1) Wages, investment income, checking/savings, child support, social security/disability/welfare income, selling assets/non-exempt property, etc.

(2) Loans and ability to borrow money.

5. Consider the defendant’s expenses:

- a. Number and ages of dependents;
- b. Rent/mortgage payment;
- c. Debts and obligations (car notes, credit cards, etc.);
- d. Personal expenses; and
- e. Illness/incapacity of defendant or spouse.
- 6. Consider other evidence:
 - a. Ability to work; and
 - b. Spouse's financial condition.
- 7. Factors not to be considered:
 - a. Future ability to pay;
 - b. Financial resources of parents and other relatives;
 - c. Exempt property including homestead and vehicles (see Chapters 41 and 42, Texas Property Code); and
 - d. Attitude.
- 8. Review financial information sheet with the defendant, if necessary.
- 9. Review any federal assistance program(s) that the defendant is participating in.
- 10. Procedural issues:
 - a. Consider the truthfulness of indigent affidavit and defendant's testimony;
 - b. Examine court records — payment history and/or prior indigence hearing;
 - c. Documentation:

Art. 1.053, C.C.P.

- (1) Note date and time of hearing or ruling; and
- (2) Attach or secure all documentation with ruling and place in file.
- 11. Upon determination that defendant is unable to immediately pay the fine and costs:
 - a. Consider ordering payment:
 - (1) All at a later date;
 - (2) In periodic installments;
 - b. Consider ordering community service:
 - (1) Each eight hours of service discharges not less than \$150 of the fine and costs.
 - (2) No more than 16 hours per week, unless the court finds that a greater period would not work a hardship.
 - (3) Court must specify the number of hours to be performed and the day by which the defendant must submit documentation to the court verifying completion.
 - (4) Can be used in conjunction with partial payment.

Art. 45A.251, C.C.P.

Explain that upon conviction, the defendant must pay a \$15 time payment reimbursement fee if any part of the fine or court costs is paid on or after the 31st day after judgment is entered. Art. 102.030, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.254-45A.255, C.C.P.
See TMCEC 2026 Forms Book:
Community Service Order; and
Community Service Time Sheet.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Defendants charged with a traffic offense or possession of alcohol by a minor who are residents of Texas and ordered to perform community service as a condition of deferred disposition may elect to perform the required community service in the county in which the court is located, or the county in which the defendant resides; but only if the entity or organization agrees to supervise the defendant in the performance of the defendant's community service work and report to the court on the defendant's community service work. | <p>Art. 45A.255, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Consider the waiver of all or part of a fine imposed. You may waive if you determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Defendant is indigent or does not have sufficient income to pay all or part of the fine, or was a child (under 17) at the time the offense was committed; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Discharging the fine through community service or tutoring (for a school offense) would impose an undue hardship on the defendant. | <p>Art. 45A.257, C.C.P.</p> <p>See Step 12 below.</p> <p>See Step 13 below.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Consider the waiver of all part or part of the costs imposed. You may waive if you determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Defendant is indigent or does not have sufficient income to pay all or part of the fine; or <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Defendant was a child (under 17) at the time of offense was committed; and | <p>Art. 45A.257(b),C.C.P.</p> <p>See Step 12 below.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 12. A defendant is presumed to be indigent or to not have sufficient resources to pay all or part of the fine or costs if the defendant: | <p>Art. 45A.257(c),C.C.P.</p> |

- (1) Is in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (or was at the time of the offense); or
 - (2) Is designated as a homeless child or youth, as defined by 42 U.S.C. 11434a (or was at the time of the offense).
13. A determination of undue hardship is in the court's discretion. In making that determination, the court may consider, as applicable, the defendant's:
- (1) significant physical or mental impairment or disability;
 - (2) pregnancy and childbirth;
 - (3) substantial family commitments or responsibilities, including child or dependent care;
 - (4) work responsibilities and hours;
 - (5) transportation limitations;
 - (6) homelessness or housing insecurity; and
 - (7) any other factors the court determines relevant.

Art. 45A.257(d), C.C.P.

14. If the defendant notifies the judge that the defendant has difficulty paying the fine and costs in compliance with judgment, the judge shall hold a reconsideration hearing to determine whether the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant.

Art. 45A.258, C.C.P.

This reconsideration hearing was created by the Legislature in 2019, and judges may allow a defendant to appear by telephone or videoconference if a personal appearance would impose an undue hardship. Art. 45A.260, C.C.P.

- a. A defendant may notify the judge by:

- (1) voluntarily appearing and informing the judge or the clerk of the court in the manner established by the justice or judge for the purpose;
 - (2) filling a motion with the judge;
 - (3) mailing a letter to the judge; or
 - (4) any other method established by the judge for that purpose.
- b. If the judge determines at the hearing that the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant, the judge shall consider whether to allow time payment, community service, full or partial waiver, or some combination of those methods.
- c. The judge may decline to hold a reconsideration hearing if the judge:
- (1) previously held a reconsideration hearing with respect to the case and is able to determine without holding a hearing that the judgment does not impose an undue hardship on the defendant; or
 - (2) is able to determine without holding a hearing that the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant; and the fine and costs should be satisfied through time payment, community service, full or partial waiver, or some combination of those methods.
- d. The judge retains jurisdiction of the case for the purpose of making a determination at a reconsideration hearing.

CHAPTER 9 BOND FORFEITURES

Municipal judges are empowered to admit persons to bail and to forfeit bail in the same manner as provided for county courts. The failure to perform the condition on the bond causes the court to declare forfeiture of the bail. Therefore, a defendant’s failure to appear in court after posting bail and the judicial declaration of the forfeiture initiates bond forfeiture procedures.

Generally, Chapter 22, C.C.P., governs bond forfeiture proceedings. The exception to using the bond forfeiture procedures in Chapter 22 is found in Art.45A.256, C.C.P. This statute provides an additional method of forfeiting a cash bond in certain instances.

1. Cash Bond Forfeitures in Satisfaction of Fine Under Article 45A.256, C.C.P.

Checklist 9-1	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Ask the defendant to acknowledge his or her presence when the defendant’s name is called.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. When the defendant fails to answer, order the bailiff or another to call the defendant’s name distinctly at the courthouse door.	Art. 22.02, C.C.P. Calling name distinctly from the courtroom door is substantial compliance. <i>Green v. State</i> , 670 S.W.3d 633 (Tex. Crim. App. 2023). See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Bailiff’s/Clerk’s Affidavit of Defendant’s Failure to Appear</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. If the defendant has posted a cash bond and has signed a conditional plea of nolo contendere and waiver of jury trial, the judge may forfeit the bond for fine and court costs when the defendant fails to appear. Otherwise, skip remaining steps and proceed to judgment.	Art. 45A.256, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Notify the defendant immediately by regular mail of the court action and the right to request a new trial.	

- ❑ 5. If the defendant makes a request for a new trial within 10 days after the forfeiture, the court shall grant the motion and allow the defendant to withdraw his or her conditional plea of nolo contendere and waiver of jury trial. The bond is reinstated and the case is set for trial.

To count, start the day after the forfeiture and count 10 calendar days. If the 10th day falls on a weekend or holiday, go to the next working day of the court for the 10th day.

- ❑ a. Amount of time increased by the “Mailbox Rule.”

If the request for new trial is mailed first class mail on or before the due date of filing of the request for new trial and received by the clerk not later than 10 days after the due date, the motion is properly filed. (“Day” does not include Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.) Make sure the clerk keeps the envelope showing the postmark.

- ❑ 6. If the defendant does not make a timely motion for a new trial, the judgment and forfeiture become final. Court costs are paid to the State and the fine is deposited in the general revenue fund. If the offense is a traffic offense, the court reports the conviction to the Department of Public Safety:

- ❑ a. If the defendant has been in jail, jail time credit is required to be given at a rate of not less than \$150 for a period of time specified in the judgment. The court should determine the period of time between eight and 24 hours.
- ❑ b. Depending on the credit and amount of fine imposed, the court may have to refund all or part of the bond.

Sec. 311.014, G.C.

Art. 45A.054, C.C.P.
Defendants filing documents by mail have additional time (10 days) in which to present the document to the court. This rule, commonly called the “Mail Box Rule,” increases the time for filing documents.

If a defendant initially entered a plea in open court, the judge must inquire into the defendant’s ability to pay. Art. 45A.252, C.C.P. See Checklist 8-1.

Arts. 45A.251, and 45A.261, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 9 BOND FORFEITURES

2. Cash, Surety, or Personal Bond Forfeiture Procedures Under Chapter 22, C.C.P.

Before a judgment nisi is issued initiating a bond forfeiture, a surety can be released from the responsibility on the bond by filing an affidavit of intention to surrender the defendant. A surety may not be released from responsibility if the accused is in federal custody to determine whether the accused is lawfully present in the United States under Art. 17.16, C.C.P. The affidavit must include a statement that notice to the principal’s attorney has been given as required by Art. 17.19, C.C.P. See Arts. 17.16 and 17.19, C.C.P., for rules regarding discharge of liability on bond.

An action by the State to forfeit a bail bond must be brought not later than the fourth anniversary of the date the principal fails to appear in court. Art. 22.18, C.C.P.

Checklist 9-2	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>“Agreed judgment” is a judgment entered on agreement of the parties, which receives the sanction of the court. When the court gives the agreement its sanction, it becomes the judgment of the court.</p> <p>An “answer” is the formal written statement made by a defendant setting forth grounds for his or her defense. In some instances the answer may need to be verified (sworn to).</p> <p>A “citation” is a writ (written order) issued by the clerk of the court. The citation notifies a person of a lawsuit filed against him or her and directs the person to file an answer to the suit within a certain number of days.</p> <p>“Defendant” is a term used to describe the surety or the principal.</p> <p>“Forfeiture” means the signing of the judgment nisi.</p> <p>“Judgment nisi” is a temporary order which will become final unless the defendant in the criminal case and/or the surety show good cause why the judgment should be set aside.</p> <p>“Judicial notice” is an act by which a court, in conducting a trial, will, without the production of evidence, recognize the existence and truth of certain facts or documents because the court already is aware of the facts or documents.</p> <p>A “movant” is one who makes a motion before a court.</p>	

“Pleadings” are formal documents filed by parties, stating their respective claims and defenses.

A “principal” is the defendant in the criminal case.

“*Scire Facias*” is a special docket required by law to handle all cases and proceedings involved in the forfeiture of bail bonds. This docket may also be called the civil docket.

Art. 22.10, C.C.P.

“Summary proceeding” is any proceeding by which a controversy (lawsuit) is settled, case disposed of, or trial conducted in a prompt and simple manner, without a jury. The court may grant a summary judgment when it believes that there is no genuine issue of material fact and that the party is entitled to prevail as a matter of law. Any party to a civil action may move for a summary judgment.

“Surrender” means that a surety may relieve himself or herself of liability before forfeiture by surrendering the accused into custody or by filing an affidavit stating that the accused is in federal, state, or county custody. A surety may not be released from responsibility if the accused is in federal custody to determine whether the accused is lawfully present in the United States.

Art. 17.16 *et. seq.*, C.C.P.

A “waiver” is a sworn statement that intentionally and voluntarily relinquishes the right of being served by citation.

- 1. Ask the defendant to acknowledge his or her presence when the defendant’s name is called.
- 2. When the defendant fails to answer, order the bailiff or another to call the name distinctly at the courthouse door.
- 3. Note the time the call was made and who made the call.

Art. 22.02, C.C.P.
 Calling the defendant’s name distinctly at the courtroom door is substantial compliance. *Green v. State*, 670 S.W.3d 633 (Tex. Crim. App. 2023).
 See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Bailiff’s/Clerk’s Affidavit of Defendant’s Failure to Appear*.

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. If the defendant does not appear within a reasonable time after the call, enter judgment nisi against the defendant and his or her sureties. (The judgment nisi is usually prepared by the clerk for the judge’s signature.)</p> | <p>Arts. 22.02 and 23.05, C.C.P.
 State’s Motion for Bond Forfeiture of (<i>Defendant’s name</i>)’s bond is granted. A capias for the defendant’s arrest is hereby issued with a new bond set at \$ _____.
 See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Judgment Nisi Declaring Forfeiture: Cash or Personal Recognizance Bond and Judgment Nisi Declaring Forfeiture: Surety Bond.</i></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Issue a capias for the defendant’s arrest.</p> | <p>Art. 23.05, C.C.P.
 See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Capias: After Forfeiture or Upon Surrender of Principal.</i></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Set the new bond. (May require a cash bond.)</p> | <p>Art. 23.05, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. Set the forfeiture case on the <i>scire facias</i> or civil docket:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. List “The State of Texas” as plaintiff.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. List the principal and any sureties as defendants.</p> | <p>Art. 22.10, C.C.P.
 See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Scire Facias Docket.</i></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. On request of the prosecutor, order clerk to issue citation(s) to surety, if any, and principal:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Citation shall be in the form provided for citations in civil cases. Prosecutor may request multiple citations be issued.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. If prosecutor presents a motion supported by an affidavit showing specific facts why personal service or service by mail has not been successful, grant substitute service (someone over 16 years of age at location specified in affidavit may accept service).</p> | <p>Art. 22.03, C.C.P.
 See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Citation.</i></p> <p>Art. 22.04, C.C.P.; Tex. R. Civ. P. 99.</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 106(b).</p> |

<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If substitute service is unsuccessful and prosecutor under oath states the residence of surety is unknown and, though diligence has been used to serve the citation, the defendant surety cannot be located, grant publication.</p>	<p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 109.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 9. The defendant/principal’s citation is served by regular mail if the address appears on the bond. If no address, court is not required to notify principal of bond forfeiture.</p>	<p>Art. 22.05, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 10. Answers are due as in civil cases: by 10 a.m. on the Monday next after the expiration of 20 days from the date of service.</p>	<p>Art 22.11, C.C.P. Tex. R. Civ. P. 92, 15.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Maximum of 27 days after proper service of citation to answer.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Amount of time increased—10 additional days are allowed if the answer is mailed by first class mail, properly addressed and mailed on or before the last day for filing an answer. (Make sure the court clerk keeps the envelope in which answer is received.)</p>	<p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 5.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. If the surety and principal fail to answer within the time limit, the court shall enter a judgment by default:</p>	<p>Art. 22.15, C.C.P. Tex. R. Civ. P. 239.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Before entering default judgment, determine if service was proper; court should have evidence of properly signed return of service or verified waiver. Proof of service includes:</p>	<p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 107.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Verified waiver;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Certified mail; green card signed by:</p>	<p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 107. Clerk is required to complete return on citation after receiving properly signed green card.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (A) Defendant/surety;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (B) State Board of Insurance (surety is corporation);</p>	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (C) Registered agent (surety is a corporation); or <input type="checkbox"/> (D) Executor, administrator, or heirs (surety is deceased). | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 106(b).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (3) If the prosecutor files a motion supported by an affidavit showing specific facts why personal service or service by mail has not been successful, grant an order of substitute service (someone over 16 years of age at location specified in affidavit) and officer’s return on citation completed; | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 107.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Personal service—officer’s return on citation is completed; or | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 109.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (5) If substitute service is unsuccessful, prosecutor’s affidavit states the residence of surety was unknown and, though diligence has been used to serve the citation, the defendant surety could not be located, order granting publication and copy of publication attached to return. | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 239.
Art. 22.15, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. Court must inquire into the sufficiency of the diligence exercised in attempting to ascertain the residence or whereabouts of the defendant before granting default judgment on service. | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 107.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Proof of service on file at least 10 days, exclusive of the date of filing and the date of judgment, for every defendant. | <p>Defendant(s) may have been served on different days and therefore may have different deadlines to answer.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Time expired for answers. | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. The State moves for default judgment.
 <input type="checkbox"/> (1) The State prepares default judgment for judge’s signature; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The State certifies the address of the parties against whom the default is taken.
 <input type="checkbox"/> f. The clerk sends notice of default judgment to surety and defendant.
 <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Summary judgment in a bond forfeiture case is usually filed by the State as claimant.
 <input type="checkbox"/> a. Party requesting must file and serve the motion and supporting affidavit at least 21 days before the time specified for hearing. <input type="checkbox"/> b. Filed when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) No valid defense is raised; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No genuine issue as to material fact exists and moving party is entitled to judgment as matter of law. <input type="checkbox"/> c. The answer must be verified if the Defendant raises any of the following defenses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Defendant did not execute bond; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Defendant is not liable in the capacity sued; | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 239.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Final Judgment: Cash or Personal Recognizance Bond – Finding for State and Final Judgment: Surety Bond – Finding for State.</i></p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 305.</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 239a.</p> <p>If an answer has been filed and the case is set on the <i>scire facias</i> docket but no one appears, the State can move for default judgment.</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 166a(a).
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Final Judgment: Cash or Personal Recognizance Bond – Finding for State; Final Judgment: Surety Bond – Finding for State; and Agreed Final Judgment.</i></p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 166a(c).</p>
<p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93.</p> |
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- (3) There is a defect of parties; or
- (4) Defendant alleged to be a corporation and is not incorporated as alleged.
- d. Not later than seven days prior to the hearing date, the defendants may serve opposing affidavits or other written responses.
- e. Fact issues include:
 - (1) Whether surety executed bond;
 - (2) Whether principal's name was called at courthouse door;
 - (3) Whether principal failed to appear; or
 - (4) Whether principal had a valid reason for not appearing.
- f. Summary judgment hearing:
 - (1) No oral testimony;
 - (2) Judge reviews pleadings; and,
 - (3) State asks judge to take judicial notice of bond and judgment *nisi*, then rests.
- g. Defense must set forth affidavits. Affidavit must include:
 - (1) Information based on personal knowledge; and
 - (2) How affiant became personally familiar with facts.
- h. If no genuine issue exists, grant movant's motion for summary judgment.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 166a(c).

Alvarez v. State, 861 S.W.2d 878 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992).

Villarreal v. State, 826 S.W.2d 621 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1992, pet. ref'd).

- i. If there is a genuine issue, deny and set for bond forfeiture trial.
- 13. Procedure at bond forfeiture trial:
 - a. At least 45 days notice of the first trial setting required.
 - b. If service of citation is by publication and there was no answer, appoint an attorney to represent the surety.
 - c. Defendant may request a jury trial.
 - d. Written request for a jury trial is required.
 - e. Must be received not less than 30 days in advance of the first trial setting for trial before the judge.
 - f. Defendant must pay jury trial fee of \$5. (Fee might be \$5, which is paid to county court, or \$10, which is paid to district court. Court will have to determine which fee is applicable.)
 - g. If fee is not paid, deny jury trial and proceed with bench trial.
- 14. Call case.
- 15. State presents case.
 - a. Bond.
 - b. Docket entry and indication of forfeiture.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 245.

In the case of continuance, the court may reset to a later date on any reasonable notice to the parties or by agreement of the parties.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 244.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 216.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 216.

“What says the State in cause number ____?”

State answers. If defense does not appear, State can move for default judgment.

“What says Defendant?”

Defense answers.

- c. Certificate, affidavit, or testimony of bailiff or person who called name.
- d. Judgment *nisi*.
- 16. State may ask court to take judicial notice of bond and judgment *nisi*.
- 17. Judge may take judicial notice of bond and judgment *nisi* unless defendant and/or surety have filed a sworn answer challenging bond's validity. If sworn answer, State must establish required predicate (present the court facts that the bond is valid) to introduce the bond.
- 18. When validity of the bond is challenged, the judge cannot take judicial notice of bond. State presents evidence that bond is:
 - a. Submitted by the defendant;
 - b. Received by the court;
 - c. Court has taken proper care of bond; and
 - d. Not more burdensome than required by law.
- 19. State rests.
- 20. Defendant, principal, or surety presents evidence on one of the following defenses:
 - a. Bond is not valid because:
 - (1) Not valid as to principal or surety; Art. 22.13, C.C.P.
 - (2) Defendant did not execute bond (must be verified by affidavit); or Art. 22.13, C.C.P.
 - (3) Bond is more burdensome than statute requirement. *Browne v. State*, 268 S.W.2d 131 (Tex. Crim. App. 1954).
 - b. Defendant or principal died before forfeiture taken. Art. 22.13, C.C.P.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Defendant or principal was sick or some uncontrollable circumstance prevented the defendant's appearance. Defendant shows that the principal's failure to appear arose from no fault on the principal's part. | <p>Art. 22.13, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Incarceration of the principal in any jurisdiction in the United States at the time of or not later than the 180th day after the date of the principal's failure to appear in court. | <p>Art. 22.13, C.C.P.
<i>James v. State</i>, 413 S.W.2d 111 (Tex. Crim. App. 1967).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. Defendant's name was not called at courthouse door. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> f. Surety had requested to be relieved from the bond and the court had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Refused to issue a warrant of arrest for principal after the affidavit for surrender of the principal was filed with the court; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) After refusal to issue warrant, principal failed to appear. | <p>Arts. 17.16 and 17.19, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> g. The following defenses must be verified by affidavit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Defendant did not execute bond; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Defendant is not liable in the capacity sued; <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Defendant does not have legal capacity to be sued; <input type="checkbox"/> (4) There is a defect of parties; or <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Defendant alleged to be a corporation is not incorporated as alleged. | <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93.</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93(7).</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93(2).</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93(1).</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93(4).</p> <p>Tex. R. Civ. P. 93(6).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 21. After a judicial declaration of forfeiture is entered the court has the power to do any of the following: | <p>Art. 22.125, C.C.P.</p> |

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Exonerate the defendant and any sureties for cause;</p> | <p>Art. 22.13, C.C.P. If the principal is not liable, everyone is exonerated. If the principal is liable and one or more sureties, if any, is liable on bond, then only non-liable sureties are exonerated.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Remit forfeiture;</p> | <p>Art. 22.125, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Set aside forfeiture only as expressly provided for in Chapter 22, C.C.P.; or</p> | <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Dismissal and Reinstatement of Bond; Motion and Order of Dismissal with Costs; Motion and Order of Dismissal without Costs; and Agreed Final Judgment.</i></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The court may approve any proposed settlement of the liability on the forfeiture that is agreed to by the State and by the defendant or the defendant’s sureties, if any.</p> | <p>Art. 22.14, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 22. If no exoneration, enter judgment against each for the amount in which sureties, if any, are respectively bound.</p> | <p>“The court finds that the principal and/or surety has/have shown grounds for exoneration and the court enters an order of dismissal in this matter.”</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 23. Enter dismissal of forfeiture if exoneration is found.</p> | <p>Art. 22.16, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 24. Remittitur.</p> | <p>Sec. 302.002, Fin. C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the defendant or surety is entitled to remittitur, before entry of final judgment and written motion submitted, deduct from the amount of the bond, court costs, interest, and any reasonable costs to the city for the return of the defendant.</p> | <p></p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Interest accrues on the bond amount from the date of forfeiture in the same manner and at the same rate as provided for in the accrual of prejudgment interest in civil cases.</p> | <p></p> |

- c. Interest on the bond amount after forfeiture begins to accrue on the face amount of the bond if no specified rate of interest is agreed upon by the defendant (surety) or State (prosecutor). Interest on the bond forfeiture begins to accrue from the date of the judgment nisi.
- d. Remittitur is required if the defendant or sureties show:
 - (1) Defendant (principal) is released on new bail; or
 - (2) The case for which the bond was given is dismissed.
- e. The court may remit the bond or any part of the bond for any other good cause shown the court.
- 25. Agreed Judgment. If the county population is more than 110,000 or a bail bond board created within the county:
 - a. State and defense may agree to an amount less than bond and recommendation is submitted to court.
 - b. Court accepts the recommendation and enters a final judgment.

Arts. 22.16(c) and 22.17(a), C.C.P.
Dees v. State, 865 S.W.2d 461
 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993).

Art. 22.125, C.C.P.; Sec. 1704.205,
 O.C.

The court accepts the State’s recommendation of the agreed judgment and finds that the judgment nisi is now final. The defendant and sureties are jointly and severally bound in the amount of \$ _____ and costs of court to (*City*), Texas and order judgment be entered and execution issued. (Note: If sureties are a corporation, they are not in default until the 11th day after judgment. Sec. 1704.212, O.C.)
 See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Agreed Final Judgment*.

26. Motion for new trial:

- a. Defendant and/or surety requests within 30 days after final judgment has been signed.
- b. Request (motion) is made in writing.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 329(b).

Motion extends time for issuance of execution up to 105 days. If the judge never signs the motion for new trial, it will be deemed overruled 75 days after the original judgment was signed. The same rule applies whenever a final judgment is signed.

27. Non-contested cases:

- a. Proper answer is filed; and
- b. Defendant is not contesting forfeiture.

Tex. R. Civ. P. 245.

The case may be tried or disposed of at any time, whether set or not, and may be set at any time for any other time.

28. Appeal:

- a. Defendant(s) have the right to appeal a final forfeiture.

Art. 45A.202, C.C.P., C.C.P.

29. Special bill of review:

- a. Defense presents not later than two years after the date of final judgment.
- b. Includes request, on equitable grounds, that the final judgment be reformed and that all or part of the bond be remitted to the surety.
- c. The court grants a bill in part or in whole. For bill of review, interest accrues on the bond amount from the date of:
 - (1) The date of forfeiture to the date of final judgment in the same manner and at the same rate as provided for the accrual of prejudgment interest in civil cases; and

Art. 22.17, C.C.P.

The court grants the bill of review (*in part / in whole*) and orders that judgment be reformed and the amount of \$_____ be returned to the defendant.

- (2) The date of final judgment to the date of the order for remittitur at the same rate as provided for the accrual of post-judgment interest in civil cases.

- d. The court denies the bill.

The State should review and respond to the bill. If granting the bill, costs of court, any reasonable expenses in re-arresting the defendant, and interest accrued on the bond from the date of the forfeiture should be deducted.

CHAPTER 10 NEW TRIALS AND APPEALS

1. Motion for New Trial in Non-record Municipal Court

Unlike in Municipal Courts of Record, motions for new trial are not a prerequisite to an appeal. Motions for new trial can still be filed in non-record courts, however, and courts should respond to them appropriately. Keep in mind the following regarding motions for new trial:

Checklist 10-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A defendant has five days after the rendition of judgment and sentence to file a motion for new trial.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.201(a), C.C.P.</p> <p>See Article 45A.054, C.C.P., for an increase in the amount of time to file the motion for new trial. If the defendant mails the motion for new trial on or before the due date and the clerk receives the motion not later than 10 days after the due date, the motion is timely filed. Do not count Saturday, Sunday, or legal holidays.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A motion for new trial may be granted not later than 10 days after the date of judgment when the judge, for good cause shown, believes that justice has not been served.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.201(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Since the judge must rule on the motion by the 10th calendar day after judgment, the motion, if filed by mail, may be overruled by operation of law.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court must hold a second trial as soon as practicable.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.201(d), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. A defendant may only receive one new trial.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.201(e), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. In no case is the State entitled to a new trial.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.201(f), C.C.P.</p>

CHAPTER 10 NEW TRIALS AND APPEALS

2. Appeal in Non-record Municipal Court

Checklist 10-2

- 1. All defendants have a right to appeal their convictions.
- 2. Defendants are not required to go to trial; the defendant can plead guilty or nolo contendere and have judgment entered.
- 3. Defendant may give notice of appeal (but is not required to do so).
- 4. An appeal bond must be filed with the judge who tried the case not later than the 10th day after the date the judgment was entered.
 - a. Mailbox Rule – If defendant mails the bond on or before the due date and the court receives it within 10 working days from the due date, the bond is properly filed.
 - b. If appeal bond is not timely, the municipal court should still send it to the appellate court.
- 5. Appearance by mail or delivery in person to the court: Court shall notify the defendant either in person or by regular mail of the amount of any fine or costs assessed in the case, information regarding the alternatives to the full payment of any fine or costs assessed against the defendant, if the defendant is unable to pay that amount, and, if requested by the defendant, the amount of an appeal bond the court will approve.

Script/Notes

Art. 44.02, C.C.P.
See *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*: Chapters 1 and 8.

Art. 45A.202(c), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.203(a), C.C.P.

Courts should keep the defendant's postmarked envelope. Art. 45A.054, C.C.P.

The appellate court does not have jurisdiction if the bond is not timely, and the appellate court shall remand the case back to the municipal court for execution of the sentence. Art. 45A.203(b), C.C.P.

Art. 27.14(b), C.C.P.

A court may send any notice or document using mail or electronic mail. Sec. 80.002, G.C.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Mailbox Rule – If defendant mails the bond on or before the due date and the court receives it within 10 working days from the due date, the bond is properly filed. <input type="checkbox"/> b. If appeal bond is not timely, the municipal court should still send it to the appellate court. | <p>Courts should keep the defendant’s postmarked envelope. Art. 45A.054, C.C.P.</p> <p>The appellate court does not have jurisdiction if the bond is not timely, and the appellate court shall remand the case back to the municipal court for execution of the sentence. Art. 45A.203(b)),C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Appeal bond must be at least two times the amount of the fine and court costs, but in no case less than \$50. | <p>Art. 45A.203(c), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Bond may be cash or surety (court cannot require cash); judge may grant a personal appeal bond. | <p>Arts. 17.38 and 44.20, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Conditions of the appeal bond – Must recite that the defendant has been convicted and has appealed and that the defendant will make a personal appearance before the court to which the appeal is taken instanter, if the court is in session, or, if the court is not in session, at its next regular term, stating the time and place of that session, and there remain from day to day and term to term, and answer in the appealed case before the appellate court. | <p>Art. 45A.203(e), C.C.P.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>: Cash Appeal Bond; Surety Appeal Bond; and Personal Appeal Bond.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 8. If bond is filed after time deadline, the appellate court shall remand (send back) the case to the municipal court to collect the judgment. | <p>Art. 45A.203(b), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 9. If bond is defective in form or substance, the appellate court may allow the defendant to file a new bond. | <p>Art. 44.15, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 10. When court receives bond, clerk should date stamp day received. | <p></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Posting of bond perfects (completes) appeal. | <p>Art. 45A.203(a), C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Clerk should give bond to judge to make a determination if the surety is sufficient. | <p>Arts. 17.10 and 17.13-141, C.C.P.</p> |

- 12. Clerk makes copies of all original papers in case file.
- 13. Clerk sends all the original papers and attaches the bond with a certified record to the appellate court (usually county court). The certified record could include:
 - a. Citation;
 - b. Complaint;
 - c. Magistrate’s warning;
 - d. Appearance bond;
 - e. Plea form;
 - f. Copy of setting notice to defendant;
 - g. Applications for subpoenas;
 - h. Writ summoning venire;
 - i. Jury waiver;
 - j. Venire;
 - k. Jury;
 - l. Verdict;
 - m. Certified copy of judgment of conviction;
 - n. Motion for new trial;
 - o. Notice of appeal; and
 - p. Appeal bond.
- 14. Case is tried de novo in county court.

Art. 44.18, C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Certified Transcript of Proceedings (Court of Non-Record)*.

Trial de novo means a whole new trial as if no earlier trial had occurred.
Arts. 45A.202(b), C.C.P.

- 15. If defendant is convicted in appellate court, appellate court collects fine and deposits it in the county treasury.

 - 16. Defendant may not withdraw appeal.
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CHAPTER 10 NEW TRIALS AND APPEALS

3. Motion for New Trial and Appeal in Municipal Court of Record

Checklist 10-3	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. A defendant has the right to appeal from a judgment or conviction in a municipal court of record.	Sec. 30.00014(a), G.C.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. The appellate court shall determine each appeal from a municipal court of record conviction on the basis of the errors that are set forth in the appellant’s motion for new trial and that are presented in the clerk’s record and reporter’s record prepared from the proceedings leading to the conviction or appeal.	Art. 44.17, C.C.P. Sec. 30.00014(b), G.C.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. An appeal from the municipal court of record may not be by trial de novo.	Sec. 30.00014(b), G.C.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Judgment is entered (conviction).	Art. 45A.251, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Defendant makes a written motion for a new trial not later than the 10th day after date on which judgment is rendered.	Sec. 30.00014(c), G.C.
<input type="checkbox"/> a. The motion may be amended with permission of the court not later than the 20th day after the date on which the original motion is filed.	
<input type="checkbox"/> b. The court may extend the time for filing or amending not to exceed 90 days from the original filing deadline.	
<input type="checkbox"/> c. If the court does not act on the motion before the expiration of the 30 days allowed for determination of the motion, the original or amended motion is overruled by operation of law.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. If the motion for new trial is denied, and if the defendant wants to appeal, the defendant must give notice of the appeal not later than the 10th day after the date on which the motion for new trial was overruled.	Sec. 30.00014(d), G.C.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The notice of appeal may be given orally in open court, if the defendant requested a hearing on the motion for new trial. <input type="checkbox"/> b. If there is no hearing on the motion for new trial, the notice of appeal must be in writing and must be filed with the court not later than the 10th day after the motion for new trial is overruled. The court may extend for good cause the time period not to exceed 90 days from the original filing deadline. <input type="checkbox"/> c. The trial court or the clerk must note on the copies of the notice of appeal and the trial court’s certification of the defendant’s right to appeal, the case number and the date when each is filed. The clerk must then immediately send one copy of each to the clerk of the appropriate appellate court and, if the defendant is the appellant, one copy of each to the State’s attorney. | <p>Rule 25.2(e), Rules of Appellate Procedure</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. The appeal bond must be approved by the court and must be filed not later than the 10th day after the date on which the motion for new trial is overruled. | <p>Sec. 30.00015(a), G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. The appeal bond must be for \$100 or double the amount of the fines and costs adjudged against the defendant, whichever is greater. | <p>Sec. 30.00015(b), G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Appeal bond must state that the defendant was convicted in the case and has appealed and be conditioned on the defendant’s immediate and daily personal appearance in the court to which the appeal is taken. | <p>Sec. 30.00015(c), G.C.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>:
Cash Appeal Bond; Surety Appeal Bond; and Personal Appeal Bond.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. Judge determines whether the surety is sufficient. | <p>Sec. 30.00015(a), G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 8. If bond is defective in form or substance, the appellate court may allow the defendant to file a new bond. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Defendant must pay the cost for an actual transcript of the proceedings. | <p>Sec. 30.00014(g), G.C.</p> |

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 10. Defendant must pay for a reporter’s record.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00019(b), G.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. Record on appeal: Must conform to the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure and the C.C.P.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00016, G.C.
 Art. 44.33, C.C.P.
 Rule 34.1-35.3, Rules of Appellate Procedure</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The clerk’s record must conform to provisions in the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure and the C.C.P.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00017, G.C.
 See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Checklist for Record on Appeal (Court of Record)</i>.
 See Checklist 10-4.</p> <p>Rules 33.1 and 33.2, Rules of Appellate Procedure</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The bills of exception must conform to the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure and the C.C.P.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00018, G.C.
 A bill of exception is a formal statement in writing of the objections or exceptions taken by a party during trial to the decisions, rulings, or instructions of the trial judge, stating the objection, with the facts and circumstances on which it is founded, and signed by the judge.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The reporter’s record must conform to the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure and the C.C.P.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00019, G.C.
 Art. 44.33, C.C.P.
 Rules 34.6, 35.2, and 35.3, Rules of Appellate Procedure</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Transfer of the record – Not later than the 60th day after the date on which the notice of appeal is given or filed, the parties must file the reporter’s record, a written description of material to be included in the clerk’s record, and any material to be included in the clerk’s record that is not in the custody of the clerk.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00020(a), G.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) On completion of the record, the municipal judge shall approve the record in the manner provided for record completion, approval, and notification in the appellate court.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00020(b), G.C.</p> |

<p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) After the judge approves the record, the clerk shall promptly send the record to the appellate court clerk for filing.</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00020(c), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The appellate court determines appeal from the municipal court of record conviction on the basis of the errors that are set forth in the appellant’s motion for new trial and that are presented in the transcript and statement of facts.</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00014(b), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. Brief on Appeal:</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00021, G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. An appellant’s brief on appeal must be filed with the appellate court clerk not later than the 15th day after the date on which the clerk’s record and reporter’s record are filed with that clerk.</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00021(a)-(b), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. An appellee’s brief on appeal must be filed with the appellate court clerk not later than the 15th day after the date on which the appellant’s brief is filed.</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00021(c), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Each party shall deliver a copy of the brief to the opposing party and to the municipal judge.</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00021(d), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 13. Withdrawal of appeal and new trial:</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00022, G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The trial court shall decide from the briefs of the parties whether the appellant should be permitted to withdraw the notice of appeal and be granted a new trial by the court. The court may grant a new trial at any time before the record is filed with the appellate court.</p>	<p>Unless the briefs are filed well in advance of the deadline, the municipal court will not have the ability to grant the new trial.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 14. Disposition on appeal – Appellate court may:</p>	<p>Sec. 30.00024(a)(1), G.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Affirm the judgment of the municipal court of record;</p>	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) If the judgment is affirmed, the fine imposed on appeal and the costs imposed on appeal shall be collected from the defendant by the municipal court, and the fine of the municipal court when collected shall be paid into the municipal treasury. | <p>Art. 44.281, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The municipal court may enforce the judgment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (a) Forfeiting the defendant's bond; <input type="checkbox"/> (B) Issuing a writ of <i>capias</i> for the defendant; <input type="checkbox"/> (C) Abstracting the judgment; <input type="checkbox"/> (D) The municipal court may order a refund of the defendant's costs; or <input type="checkbox"/> (E) The municipal court may conduct an indigency hearing. | <p>Sec. 30.00025(b)(1)-(5), G.C.</p> <p>See Checklist 2-2.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Capias</i> (Chapter 43).</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Abstract of Judgment</i>.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. Reverse and remand for a new trial; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) If appellate court grants a new trial, it is as if the municipal court of record granted the new trial. The new trial is conducted by the municipal court of record. | <p>See Checklist 8-3.</p> <p>Sec. 30.00024(a)(2), G.C.</p> <p>Sec. 30.00026, G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> c. Reverse and dismiss the case; or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) If appellate court reverses and dismisses the case, the court must refund the \$25 transcription preparation fee to the defendant. | <p>Sec. 30.00024(a)(3), G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. Reform and correct the judgment. | <p>Sec. 30.00024(a)(4), G.C.</p> |

- ❑ (3) A transcript of all or part of the proceedings shown by the notes to have occurred before, during, or after the trial, if requested by the defendant.

CHAPTER 11 CITY ORDINANCES — General Rules

1. General Rules

Checklist 11-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Jurisdiction:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. A home-rule city can enact and enforce laws to abate and remove nuisances in the city or within 5,000 feet of the city limits. General law cities can enact and enforce laws to abate and remove nuisances within the city limits.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. A municipal court has jurisdiction over any individual or business entity acting within its limits.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. A municipal court has jurisdiction over city ordinance violations that occur on city-owned property in the city’s extraterritorial jurisdiction.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. A municipality may enter into an agreement with a contiguous municipality or a municipality with boundaries that are within one-half mile to establish concurrent jurisdiction in the municipalities and provide original jurisdiction to the municipal court in which a case is brought as if the municipal court were located in the municipality in which the case arose. This concurrent jurisdiction is limited to the following types of cases:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) All criminal cases arising under a municipal ordinance or resolution, rule, or order of a joint board operating an airport that either municipality would have jurisdiction over;</p>	<p>See <i>Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System</i>: Chapter 1.</p> <p>Chapter 54 and Secs. 217.042, 217.022, L.G.C.; <i>Treadgill v. State</i>, 275 S.W.2d 658 (Tex. Crim. App. 1955).</p> <p>Art. 4.14(a), C.C.P.; Sec. 29.003(a), G.C.</p> <p>Sec. 29.003(a), G.C.</p> <p>Sec. 29.003(i), G.C.</p> <p>Sec. 29.003(a), G.C.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (2) All criminal cases arising under state law that arise within either municipality’s territorial limits or property owned by the municipality located in its extraterritorial jurisdiction that are punishable only by a fine or arise under Chapter 106, A.B.C., and do not include confinement as an authorized sanction; | <p>Sec. 29.003(b), G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (3) Seizure of cruelly treated animal cases; and | <p>Sec. 821.022, H.S.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (4) Truant conduct cases. | <p>Sec. 65.004(c), F.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ e. A municipal court has concurrent jurisdiction with county and justice courts in cases that arise under ordinances of the municipality’s extraterritorial jurisdiction under Section 216.902 of the Local Government Code (Regulation of Outdoor Signs in Municipality’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction). | <p>Art. 4.11, C.C.P.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ f. Municipal Courts of record in home-rule municipalities have jurisdiction over city ordinance violations enacted under Sections 215.072, 217.042, 341.903, and 551.002, L.G.C., providing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (1) A municipality is permitted to inspect dairies, slaughterhouses, or slaughter pens in or outside the municipal limits from which milk or meat is furnished to the residents of the municipality. | <p>Sec. 30.00005, G.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ (2) A municipality may define and prohibit any nuisance within the limits of the municipality and within 5,000 feet outside those limits and may enforce all ordinances necessary to prevent and summarily abate and remove a nuisance. | <p>Sec. 215.072, L.G.C.</p> |
| | <p>Sec. 217.042, L.G.C.</p> |

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| <p>☐ (3) A home-rule municipality may police the following areas owned by and located outside the municipality: (1) parks and grounds; (2) lakes and land contiguous to and used in connection with a lake; and (3) speedways and boulevards.</p> | <p>Sec. 341.903, L.G.C.</p> |
| <p>☐ (4) A home-rule municipality may prohibit the pollution or degradation of the city’s water supply and provide protection and policing of watersheds. The statute further provides that the authority granted by this statute may be exercised inside the city boundaries and in the extra-territorial jurisdiction only if required to meet certain other state or federal requirements. The authority granted under this statute regarding the protection of recharge areas may be exercised outside the city boundaries within the extra-territorial limits provided that the city has a population greater than 750,000 and the groundwater constitutes more than 75 percent of the city’s water supply.</p> | <p>Sec. 551.002, L.G.C.</p> |
| <p>☐ g. The city may grant the municipal court of record, by passing an ordinance, civil jurisdiction for the purpose of enforcing municipal ordinances under Chapter 214, L.G.C., (Nuisance), and Chapter 683, T.C., (Junked Vehicles). This jurisdiction is concurrent with district and county courts at law and includes the power to issue search warrants and destruction orders.</p> | <p>Sec. 30.00005(d), G.C.</p> |
| <p>☐ h. The city may create by ordinance an administrative procedure for dealing with nuisance violations and junked vehicles that may be appealed to the municipal court.</p> | <p>Sec. 54.044, L.G.C. and
Sec. 683.0765, T.C.</p> |

- 2. Ordinance is **invalid** if:
 - a. It is inconsistent with the city’s charter;
 - b. It is inconsistent with state law or the Texas Constitution;
 - c. It is preempted by state or federal law;
 - d. It is inconsistent with the U.S. Constitution or federal law; or
 - e. It is enacted in violation of the Texas Open Meetings law and not subsequently validated by the Legislature.
- 3. Culpable mental states:
 - a. If the ordinance does not prescribe a culpable mental state, a culpable mental state is nevertheless required unless the definition of the offense plainly dispenses with any mental element.
 - b. An offense defined by municipal ordinance may not dispense with the requirement of a culpable mental state if the offense is punishable by a fine exceeding \$500.

Some statutes specifically grant authority to cities to go beyond state law definitions or regulatory schemes.

A determination of invalidity in municipal court results in an individual being found not guilty. Barring an injunction from a court of equity, a municipality may continue to enforce its ordinances. *State v. Morales*, 869 S.W.2d 941 (Tex. 1994).

Sec. 6.02(b), P.C. A city ordinance on adult businesses was held to require a culpable mental state even though the ordinance was silent as to the issue. *Aguirre v. State*, 22 S.W.3d 463 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999). NOTE: To the degree that *Aguirre* contradicts Section 6.02, P.C., its holding is modified by legislative enactment.

Sec. 6.02(f), P.C.

4. Notice

a. There is no notice requirement in most ordinances.

b. If there is a notice requirement, whether it has been complied with is a matter to be decided after hearing the testimony.

c. Notice need not be pled in the complaint.

5. Judicial Notice:

a. Judge **may** take judicial notice of all municipal ordinances.

b. Some court of record statutes state that the judge **shall** take judicial notice of the ordinances.

c. A printed ordinance is self-authenticating and a judge **shall** admit it without further proof.

6. Warrants:

a. A magistrate may issue search warrants for code inspections based on probable cause.

A city may adopt an ordinance which incorporates some other document, such as the International Building Code. Unless a notice provision is specifically eliminated or altered, the city is bound to follow the language of the incorporated document. *State v. Cooper*, 420 S. W. 3d 829 (Tex. Crim. App. 2013).

Check procedure in Chapter 30, G.C., if a court of record.

Requirements for these warrants are found in Section 18.05, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 12 OATHS

Complaints (Charging Instruments)

1. Complaints Filed in Municipal Courts

Caution: The term “complaint” has historically been a source of confusion in Texas criminal law (especially in the context of criminal procedure). The term describes the formal charging instrument to try Class C misdemeanors. Unfortunately, it is also the term used to describe what is commonly known as the sworn affidavit for a warrant under Chapter 15, C.C.P. Do not confuse the two different applications of the term. For a detailed discussion of the different meanings of the term “complaint,” see “Complaints, Complaints, Complaints: Don’t Let the Language of the Law Confuse You,” *The Recorder* (July 2004). Checklist 12-1 relates to the term as used to refer to the charging instrument under Chapter 45A, C.C.P. Checklist 12-2 relates to the term as it refers to the affidavit for the issuance of a warrant.

In *Naff v. State*, 946 S.W.2d 529 (Tex. App.–Fort Worth 1997, no writ), the court held that a person swearing to a complaint in municipal court may do so based on information contained in the citation. In this case, the defendant argued that the complaint filed against him in municipal court was invalid because it was sworn to by the municipal prosecutor’s secretary. The secretary did not have firsthand knowledge of the events in question. She swore to the complaint based upon the information contained in the citation written by the police officer. The court stated that there is no requirement that the person swearing to the complaint do so based on firsthand knowledge.

Checklist 12-1	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Affiant reviews complaint. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Affiant and person administering oath both raise their right hands. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Oath is administered. <li style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The following persons have authority to administer this oath: 	<p>The requisites of the complaint are found in Article 45A.101, C.C.P.</p> <p>“Affiant” - a person who signs an affidavit and swears to its truth.</p> <p>“Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that the information contained in this complaint is true and correct (so help you God)?”</p>

- (1) Any officer authorized to administer oaths;
 - (2) Municipal judge or retired municipal judge;
 - (3) Municipal court clerk or deputy court clerk;
 - (4) City secretary; and
 - (5) City attorney or deputy city attorney.
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- 4. Affiant signs complaint.
 - 5. Person administering oath signs jurat.
 - 6. Judge or clerk places municipal court seal on complaint. The impression of the seal can either be attached manually or it may be created electronically.
 - 7. If a notary public administered the oath, notary seal is also required to be placed on the complaint.

Art. 45A.101(d), C.C.P. ,
Sec.602.002, G.C.

Art. 45A.101(e), C.C.P.

“Jurat”- the certificate of an officer that a written instrument was sworn to by the individual who signed it.

All municipal courts must have a court seal, which must be included on all papers issued out of the court except subpoenas. Art. 45A.052, C.C.P.

For municipal courts of record, the seal must include the phrase: “Municipal Court of/in _____, Texas.” Sec. 30.000125, G.C.

CHAPTER 12 OATHS

Complaints (Probable Cause Affidavits)

2. Complaints Accepted by a Magistrate as Sworn Affidavit for Arrest Warrant

The affidavit made before the magistrate is called a “complaint” if it charges the commission of an offense. Art. 15.04, C.C.P. The complaint must contain the name or a reasonable description of the accused, a statement that the accused has committed or that the affiant has good reason to believe and does believe that the accused has committed some offense, and the time and place the offense was committed. Art. 15.05, C.C.P. It must also be signed by the affiant.

Checklist 12-2	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Affiant reviews complaint.	The requisites of the complaint are found in Article 15.05, C.C.P. “Affiant” - a person who signs an affidavit and swears to its truth.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Affiant and person administering oath both raise their right hands.	An affiant may appear before a magistrate, for the purposes of making oath, either in person or through an electronic broadcast system. Art. 15.03(c), C.C.P. See Checklist 2-1 on arrest warrants.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Oath is administered.	“Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that the information contained in this complaint is true and correct (so help you God)?”
<input type="checkbox"/> a. The following persons have authority to administer this oath:	Art. 15.04, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Magistrate;	
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) District Attorney; and	
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) County Attorney.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Affiant signs complaint.	Art. 15.05, C.C.P.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Person administering oath signs jurat.	“Jurat”- the certificate of an officer that a written instrument was sworn to by the individual who signed it.

CHAPTER 12 OATHS

3. Other Affidavits

One frequently administered oath involves the defendant being placed on DSC. (See Checklist 5-2.) This procedure should be followed for that affidavit or any other oath or affidavit requested or required by the court.

Checklist 12-3	Script/ Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Affiant reviews affidavit. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Defendant and person administering the oath both raise their right hands. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Oath is administered. <input type="checkbox"/> a. This oath may be administered by any person authorized to administer oaths in Texas. Persons with the authority to administer an oath most commonly seen in municipal court include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Municipal judge, retired municipal judge, or clerk; (2) Municipal judge or retired judge of a court of record; (3) Municipal court clerk of a court of record; (4) Notary public; and (5) Peace officer may administer an oath when engaged in performance of duties and oath pertains to duties. 	<p>“Affiant” - a person who signs an affidavit and swears to its truth.</p> <p>“Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that the information contained in this affidavit is true and correct (so help you God)?” “Do you and each of you solemnly swear that you will make true answers to such questions as may be propounded to you by the court, or under its directions, touching your service and qualifications as a juror (so help you God)?”</p> <p>Sec. 602.002, G.C., contains a full list of all persons who may administer an oath in Texas. Note: The ability of municipal judges and clerks to administer oaths to appointed and elected officials is detailed in Checklist 12-7.</p>

- 4. Defendant signs affidavit.
- 5. Person administering oath signs jurat.
- 6. Court seal is impressed, stamped, or electronically imprinted on document.
- 7. If a notary public administers oath, notary public seal required to be placed on affidavit.

“Jurat”- the certificate of an officer that a written instrument was sworn to by the individual who signed it.

Art. 45A.052, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 12 OATHS

4. Oaths Administered During Trial — Jurors and Witnesses

Checklist 12-4	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Jury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Summon jurors. (Jurors are required to answer questions about their qualifications; this is called voir dire.) <input type="checkbox"/> b. Ask prospective jurors to raise their right hands. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Person administering the oath raises right hand. <input type="checkbox"/> d. Oath is administered by the court or under its direction. <input type="checkbox"/> e. Voir dire is completed and six persons are selected to hear the case. <input type="checkbox"/> f. Ask jurors to raise their right hands. <input type="checkbox"/> g. Judge (or other person administering oath) raises right hand. <input type="checkbox"/> h. Oath is administered by the court or under its direction. <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Witnesses:</p>	<p>Art. 35.02, C.C.P.</p> <p>For further procedures in jury trials, see Chapter 7 in this book.</p> <p>“Do you and each of you solemnly swear that you will make true answers to such questions as may be propounded to you by the court, or under its directions, touching your service and qualifications as a juror (so help you God)?” Arts. 35.22 and 45A.159, C.C.P.</p> <p>“Do you and each of you solemnly swear that, in the case of the State of Texas against the defendant, you will a true verdict render according to the law and the evidence (so help you God)?”</p>

- a. Before testifying, each witness shall be required to declare that he or she will testify truthfully by oath or affirmation in a form calculated to awaken the witness's conscience and impress on the witness the duty to do so.
- b. Both the judge (or other person administering oath) and witness should raise their right hands.
- c. Oath is administered.

- d. Invoke "The Rule."

Rule 603, T.R.E.

"Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give in the case now on trial is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (so help you God)?"

At the request of either party, or the court, witnesses may be excluded from the courtroom so that they cannot hear the testimony of other witnesses. This is commonly called "The Rule." If "The Rule" is invoked, all witnesses should be sworn before being directed to wait outside the courtroom. Rule 614, T.R.E.

- ❑ c. Oath is administered by the court or under its direction.

“Do you solemnly swear or affirm that you will make a true interpretation to the person being examined (or the person accused, or the juror), who is deaf, of all the proceedings in the case in a language that he/she understands, and that you will repeat said deaf person’s statements, questions, and answers to questions to counsel, the court, or the jury, in the English language, to the best of your skill and judgment (so help you God)?”

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Oath for Interpreter for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Juror, Defendant, or Witness.

CHAPTER 12 OATHS

6. Court Reporters

An official court reporter must take the oath of office required of other officers of this state. In addition to the official oath, each official court reporter must sign an oath administered by the district clerk.

Checklist 12-6	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Court reporter raises right hand. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Person administering the oath raises right hand. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Oath administered by the clerk. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. The court reporter files these oaths with the papers of the court. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Court reporter signs the oath. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Person administering the oath signs jurat. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. If notary public administered the oath, notary seal is also required to be placed on the oath. 	<p>Sec. 52.045, G.C.</p> <p>“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will well and truly keep a correct and impartial record of the evidence offered in the case, the objections and the exceptions made by the parties to the case, and the rulings and remarks made by the court in determining the admissibility of testimony presented in the case (so help me God).”</p> <p>“Jurat”- the certificate of an officer that a written instrument was sworn to by the individual who signed it.</p>

CHAPTER 12 OATHS AND CEREMONIES

7. Appointed and Elected Officials

All appointed or elected officials are required to subscribe to an anti-bribery statement before taking an oath of office. Municipal judges should take and file an oath before each term of office, even if they continue to serve another term as an operation of Section 29.005 of the Government Code. See “When the Acts of a Judge May Be Void: A Look at the Constitutional Oath Requirement in Light of Section 29.005 of the Texas Government Code,” *The Recorder* (May 2013).

Checklist 12-7	Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. All elected and appointed officials, including judges, court clerks, and court reporters, must:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Swear to an anti-bribery statement; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. File it with the city secretary or clerk of the court.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Both the official and person administering oath raise their right hands.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Oath is administered.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The following municipal court personnel have authority to administer this oath:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">(1) Municipal judge or retired municipal judge;</p>	<p>Art. XVI, Sec. 1, Tex. Const. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Anti-Bribery Oath of Appointed/Elected Officer</i>.</p> <p>An amendment to the Texas Constitution effective January 1, 2002 altered the previous requirement of this section that the oath be sent to the Texas Secretary of State.</p> <p>“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I have not directly or indirectly paid, offered, promised to pay, contributed, or promised to contribute any money thing of value, or promised any public office or employment for the giving or withholding of a vote at the election at which I was elected or as a reward to secure my appointment or confirmation, whichever the case may be (so help me God).”</p> <p>See Section 602.002, G.C., for a complete list of authorized persons.</p>

- (2) Municipal court clerk; and
 - (3) Notary public.
4. Appointed official signs statement.
- a. Person administering oath signs jurat.
 - b. If notary public administers oath, notary’s seal is placed on oath.
5. Oath of office
- a. Both the appointed official and the person administering the oath raise their right hands.
 - b. Oath is administered.
 - c. The following municipal court personnel have authority to administer an oath to an appointed or elected official:
 - (1) Municipal judge or retired municipal judge;
 - (2) Municipal court clerk; and
 - (3) Notary public.

“Jurat”- the certificate of an officer that a written instrument was sworn to by the individual who signed it.

Art. XVI, Sec. 1, Tex. Const.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*:
Oath of Office.

“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm), that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of _____ of the State of Texas, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this State (so help me God).”

The oath of office should be administered at the beginning of each new term of office for a clerk or judge.

See Section 602.002, G.C., for a complete list of authorized persons.

- ☐ d. Appointed official signs oath.
 - (1) Person administering oath signs jurat.
 - (2) If notary public administers oath, notary's seal is placed on oath.

- ☐ 6. File the oath of office with the city secretary or the person responsible for maintaining the official records of the office.

The city secretary must notify the Texas Judicial Council of the name of each person who is elected or appointed as, or who vacates the office of mayor, municipal judge, or clerk of a municipal court within 30 days after the election, appointment, or vacancy. Sec. 29.013(a), G.C.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Report of Change or Vacancy in Judge/Clerk/Mayor Position*.

A copy of the reporting form can also be found here: <https://www.txcourts.gov/judicial-directory/directory-updates/>.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

1. General Procedures

IMPORTANT: Before proceeding with this checklist, see Subchapter K of Chapter 45A of the Code of Criminal Procedure for youth diversion procedures. Generally, eligible children alleged to have committed non-traffic offenses must be diverted under that subchapter.

For checklists related to Youth Diversion, go to tmcec.com/youth-diversion.

Checklist 13-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the defendant does not appear as required, see Checklist 13-16.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. If the defendant appears, determine age of offender at the time of the offense.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Generally, a municipal court has jurisdiction over a person 10 years of age or older for the following offenses:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">(1) Certain traffic offenses;</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">(2) Status Alcoholic Beverage Code offenses;</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">(3) Certain Education Code offenses;</p>	<p>A student required to make a court appearance, including days absent from school due to traveling, receives an excused absence from school. Sec. 25.087, E.C.</p> <p>Secs. 51.02(2)(A) and 51.03(f), F.C., and Sec. 8.07, P.C.</p> <p>A “status” offender is a child who is accused, adjudicated, or convicted of conduct that would not, under state law, be a crime if committed by an adult. Sec. 51.02(15), F.C.</p> <p>In 2015, the Texas Legislature repealed Failure to Attend School and designated justice, municipal, and certain county courts as truancy courts, having original, exclusive jurisdiction over allegations of truant conduct, handled as civil cases under Title 3A of the Family Code. See <i>Texas Truancy Resource Manual</i>.</p>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(4) Class C misdemeanors in the Penal Code;</p> | <p>Students younger than 12 may not be charged criminally for most types of Disorderly Conduct offenses occurring at a public school campus during regular school hours (involving language, gestures, odors, noise, and fights). Sec. 42.01., P.C.</p> |
| <p>(5) Status tobacco offenses in the Health and Safety Code; and</p> | |
| <p>(6) Other fine-only offenses.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A person who is at least 10 years of age but younger than 15 years of age is presumed incapable of committing a fine-only offense under state law or local ordinance.</p> | <p>Sec. 8.07(e), P.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) The presumption may be refuted if the prosecution proves to the court by a preponderance of the evidence that the child had sufficient capacity to understand that the conduct was wrong at the time.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) The prosecution is not required to prove that the child knew that the act was a crime or knew the legal consequences of the offense.</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Under the Transportation Code, a “minor” is a person who is younger than 17 years of age.</p> | <p>Sec. 729.001, T.C.
See Checklist 13-3 for a listing of traffic offenses and penalties.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Under the Alcoholic Beverage Code, a “minor” is a person under 21 years of age.</p> | <p>Sec. 106.01, A.B.C.
See Checklists 13-5, 13-6, and 13-15 for a listing of Alcoholic Beverage Code offenses and penalties.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. Municipal courts have jurisdiction of public intoxication of children.</p> | <p>Sec. 49.02(e), P.C.
See Checklist 13-5.</p> |
| <p>A defendant younger than age 21 is subject to the penalties in Sec. 106.071, A.B.C.</p> | |

- f. For purposes of status tobacco offenses, a “minor” is an individual under 21 years of age.
- g. For purposes of all other offenses, a child is a person who is at least age 10 and under the age of 17.
- 3. Court determines if there is probable cause to believe that a child, including a child with a mental illness or developmental disability:
 - a. Lacks the capacity to understand the proceedings or to assist in their own defense and is unfit to proceed; or
 - b. Lacks substantial capacity either to appreciate the wrongfulness of the child’s own conduct or to conform their conduct to the requirements of the law.
- 4. If the court determines that probable cause exists under Step 3 above, the court may dismiss the complaint after giving notice to the prosecution.
- 5. Court determines whether to retain jurisdiction or to transfer a case involving a child under the age of 17 to the juvenile court.
- 6. If the court does not waive jurisdiction, the court proceeds.
- 7. Determine if a parent is present. (A parent’s presence required for all proceedings if the child or minor is under the age of 17 and for a 17-year-old defendant charged with a sexting offense under Sec. 43.261, P.C.)

Sec. 161.252(a), H.S.C.
See Checklists 13-7 and 13-8 for a listing of status tobacco offenses and penalties.

Sec. 51.02(2), F.C.
Municipal courts have jurisdiction only if the child is at least 10 years of age.

Sec. 8.08, P.C.

The prosecution has the right to appeal such determinations. Art. 44.01, C.C.P.

See Checklist 13-2.
The court may not transfer a traffic offense or a tobacco offense involving persons under the age of 17.

Art. 45A.452, C.C.P.
This is subject to the requirements of Subchapter K of Chapter 45A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Youth Diversion).

“Parent” includes a person standing in parental relation, a managing conservator, or a custodian. Art. 45A.457(a)(2), C.C.P.

- ☐ 8. If the parent does not appear, determine if the parent(s) has been served with a summons. If not, reset the case.

 - ☐ a. The court must summon the parent(s) to appear in open court with his or her child (a person under the age of 17 or a 17-year-old charged with a sexting offense under Section 43.261, P.C.).
 - ☐ b. If the parent(s) has been served with a summons but failed to appear, the court may waive the requirement of the presence of the parents, guardian, or managing conservator if, after diligent effort, the court cannot locate them or compel their presence.

- ☐ 9. Notify parent and child in writing of their continuing obligation to give written notice of current address. The court should provide a copy of Art. 45A.457(h) and (i), C.C.P., to child and parent.

Marriage removes the disability of minority. Thus, the parents of defendants who are younger than 17 years of age and who are married need not be summoned. Sec. 1.104, F.C.

Art. 45A.452, C.C.P.
 This is subject to the requirements of Subchapter K of Chapter 45A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. (Youth Diversion).

If the court waives this requirement, it is advisable to document what action the court employed to compel the parent’s presence in the offender’s file. If the parent, guardian, or managing conservator fails to respond to the summons, it is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor. Art. 45A.457(g), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.457, C.C.P.

“Here is a copy of the law requiring you and your parent to give notice of your current address. If you fail to give this court written notice of your current address or if you move and fail to give written notice of your current address within seven days after moving, you and your parent(s) could be charged with a Class C misdemeanor that has a maximum penalty of \$500.”

Art. 45A.457(h), C.C.P. A child and parent required to appear before the court have an

- 10. Make notes on child's sophistication and maturity and file notes with case.

- 11. If an attorney appears without the child or the child's parent(s), reset the case.

- 12. If the child does not appear with an attorney, determine whether the child or child's parent(s) is intending to hire an attorney.

obligation to provide the court in writing with the current address and residence of the child. The obligation does not end when the child reaches age 17. On or before the seventh day after the date the child or parent changes residence, the child or parent shall notify the court of the current address in the manner directed by the court. A violation of this subsection may result in arrest and is a Class C misdemeanor. The obligation to provide notice terminates on discharge and satisfaction of the judgment or final disposition not requiring a finding of guilt.

Art. 45A.457(i), C.C.P. If an appellate court accepts an appeal for a trial de novo, the child and parent shall provide the notice under Subsection (h) to the appellate court.

Article 45A.259(h), C.C.P., requires the court to consider the defendant's sophistication and maturity before issuing a capias pro fine for the defendant when the defendant reaches age 17. This might be the only time that the court has to determine that information. See Checklist 13-19 Children Now Adults Who Fail to Pay.

Art. 45A.452, C.C.P.
"The law requires that a child and his or her parents must personally be present in open court before the court can proceed with the child's case. Therefore, I am resetting this case."

See Checklist 3-2 for explaining the defendant's right to counsel.

- a. If an attorney is going to be hired, reset the case and inform the child and parent or guardian to have the attorney present for the date and time in which the case is rescheduled.
- b. Provide the specific:
 - (1) Date;
 - (2) Place; and
 - (3) Time of the resetting.
- c. If an attorney is not going to be hired, proceed.
- 13. Explain the child’s rights, charge(s), pleas, and penalties. Make sure that child understands consequences of each plea.
- 14. In addition to the rights in Checklists 3-2 and 4-1, if the offense is a fine-only misdemeanor penal offense (includes Penal Code offenses, penal ordinance offenses, and Education Code offenses the court must:
 - a. Notify the parent and child of the child’s right to an expunction at the commencement of the proceedings; and
 - b. Give both the parent and child a copy of the expunction statute, Article 45A.463, C.C.P.
- 15. Request a plea.
- 16. On a plea of not guilty, determine whether the defendant wants to:

“At your next court date and at any subsequent court appearances, you and your parent(s) must still appear even though you will be represented by an attorney.” Art. 45A.452, C.C.P.

See Checklists 3-2 and 4-1 for rights and pleas; see Checklists 13-3, 13-4, 13-5, 13-7, and 13-12 for information on charges and penalties for each code.

See Checklist 13-20.

“You have the right to have the offense of _____ expunged.

Here is a copy of the law regarding your right to expunction. Please take time to read this information.”

See Chapter 5 on taking pleas.

“How do you plead to the charge of _____ brought against you? ‘Guilty,’ ‘No Contest,’ or ‘Not Guilty?’”

All trials are to be open to the public. Art. 1.24, C.C.P.

- a. Waive a jury trial and proceed with a non-jury trial; or
 - b. Exercise his or her right to a trial by jury.
 - c. Set the case according to the juvenile offender's request.
 - d. Set bail, if applicable.
 - e. Inform both the defendant and his or her parent or guardian of the date, time, and place of the trial.
17. On a plea of "guilty" or "no contest," inform the defendant and his or her parent or guardian of the possible options to dispose of the case:
- a. Driving safety course, if applicable.
 - b. Teen court, if applicable.
 - c. Deferred disposition, if applicable.
18. Set the fine and impose any required sanctions. The court may require rehabilitative sanctions under Article 45A.457, C.C.P. See Checklist 13-15 for imposing those sanctions.

See Chapters 6 and 7 for pretrial and trial procedures.

If the trial date is not known at the time of plea, tell the defendant and parent or guardian that notice is coming. Verify the juvenile's address at this time.

See Checklist 5-1.

Art. 45A.401, C.C.P.

See Checklist 8-2.
See Checklist 8-1 for sentencing.

"The fine is set in the amount of \$_____. In addition to the fine, you must pay court costs."

For Alcoholic Beverage Code offenses, see Checklist 13-6 for information on required sanctions.

For tobacco offenses, see Checklist 13-9 for information on required sanctions.

For additional sanctions that the court might also impose upon conviction for any offense, see Checklist 13-15.

- 19. If a diversion is not required under Subchapter K, a judge shall allow a defendant who is a child to elect at the time of conviction to discharge the fine and costs by:
 - a. Paying the fine and costs when the sentence is pronounced, at a later date, or a specified portion at designated intervals (unless the defendant is under the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services or in extended foster care);
 - b. By performing community service;
 - c. By receiving tutoring under Article 45A.460, regardless of whether the applicable offense occurred at a location specified by Subsection (a) of that article (school grounds); or
 - d. Through a combination of the alternatives described above.

Art. 45A.253(b), (d), C.C.P.
A defendant in conservatorship or extended foster care may not be ordered to pay the fine and costs but may be required to discharge by community service as provided by Arts. 45A.254, 45A.459 or 45A.460, C.C.P., as appropriate.
Art. 45A.253(d), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

2. Waiver of Municipal Court Jurisdiction and Transfer of Child to Juvenile Court

Checklist 13-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the court decides to waive jurisdiction, see the following information:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A municipal court may enter an “order of waiver of jurisdiction” and transfer the juvenile defendant to juvenile court whenever a complaint is pending against a juvenile for any fine-only offense other than a traffic offense, or a tobacco offense under Section 161.252, H.S.C. This is called discretionary transfer.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A municipal court shall enter an “order of waiver of jurisdiction” and transfer the juvenile defendant to juvenile court if the complaint pending alleges a violation of Section 43.261, P.C., that is punishable by fine-only (e.g., “sexting”).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A municipal court shall enter an “order of waiver of jurisdiction” and transfer the juvenile defendant to juvenile court if the municipal court or another court has previously dismissed a complaint against the child under Section 8.08, P.C.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. A municipal court shall enter an “order of waiver of jurisdiction” and transfer the juvenile defendant to juvenile court when the juvenile has previously been convicted of:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Two or more misdemeanors punishable by fine-only other than traffic or tobacco;</p>	<p>Sec. 51.08(b)(2), F.C. Sec. 161.257, H.S.C While H.B. 3186 (88th Legislature, 2023) requires that an eligible offense be diverted from criminal adjudication, Chapter 45, Subchapter E (Youth Diversion) of the Code of Criminal Procedure does not limit the authority of a municipal court to waive jurisdiction and transfer a case to juvenile court. Art. 45.303, C.C.P.</p> <p>“Sexting” offenses alleged against a child must be transferred to juvenile court. Municipal courts may only see a defendant age 17 for a “sexting” offense.</p> <p>Sec. 51.08(f), F.C. Section 8.08, P.C., allows a court to dismiss a complaint if probable cause exists to believe that the child lacked sufficient capacity to proceed in the trial or to appreciate the wrongfulness of the child’s action.</p> <p>If court is waiving because of two prior convictions, include information on prior convictions in waiver notice.</p> <p>Sec. 161.257, H.S.C. Sec. 51.08(b)(1), F.C.</p>

(2) Two or more violations of a penal ordinance of a political subdivision other than a traffic; or

(3) One or more of each of the types of misdemeanors described above.

This is called mandatory transfer.

2. A municipal court may elect not to enter an “order of waiver of jurisdiction” for a third or other subsequent violation if the court employs a juvenile case manager under Article 45.056/45A.451, C.C.P.

Sec. 51.08(d), F.C.

3. Notice to Juvenile Court

Sec. 51.08(c), F.C.

a. A municipal court is required to notify the juvenile court of any pending complaint against a juvenile in which jurisdiction is not waived except for:

A letter addressed to the juvenile court judge or the appropriate designee of the juvenile court should contain the following information:

- 1) Name of the court;
- 2) Name of the defendant;
- 3) Name of the judge;
- 4) Offense charged; and
- 5) Cause number assigned to the case.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*:
Report to Juvenile Court of
Complaint Filed.

(1) A traffic offense; or

(2) A tobacco offense committed by a person under the age of 17.

b. In addition, the municipal court must furnish the juvenile court with notice of the final disposition of the cases in which the municipal court retained jurisdiction.

Sec. 51.08(c), F.C.

- 4. The fine range provided in Transportation Code violations applies to violators under age 17.
- 5. There is no right to expunge traffic convictions.

Sec. 729.001(c), T.C.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Alcoholic Beverage Code

4. General Status Offenses

Checklist 13-4	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Before proceeding with this Checklist, see Checklists 3-2, 4-1, and 13-1 for general procedures, rights, and pleas.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Identify the code provision that is alleged to have been violated.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Purchase of Alcohol by a Minor – Elements of this offense are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A minor;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Purchases;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) An alcoholic beverage.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Attempt to Purchase Alcohol by a Minor – Elements of this offense are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A minor;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) With specific intent to purchase alcohol;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Does an act amounting to more than mere preparation;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (4) That intends but fails to commit the offense.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Consumption of Alcohol by a Minor – Elements of this offense are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A minor;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Consumes;</p>	<p>Sec. 106.02, A.B.C.</p> <p>It is not an offense if the minor purchases an alcoholic beverage under the immediate supervision of a commissioned peace officer engaged in enforcing the provisions of this code.</p> <p>Sec. 106.025, A.B.C.</p> <p>Sec. 106.04, A.B.C.</p>

- (3) An alcoholic beverage.
- (4) It is an affirmative defense if the minor consumed an alcoholic beverage in the visible presence of the minor’s adult parent, guardian, or spouse.
- (5) This offense does not apply to a minor who:
 - (A) Requested emergency medical assistance in response to the possible alcohol overdose of the minor or another person;
 - (B) Was the first person to make a request for medical assistance;
 - (C) Remained on the scene until medical assistance arrived; and
 - (D) Cooperated with medical assistance and law enforcement personnel.
- (6) This offense does not apply to a minor who reports the sexual assault of the minor or another person, or is the victim of a sexual assault reported by another person, to:
 - (A) a health care provider treating the victim of the sexual assault;
 - (B) an employee of a law enforcement agency, including an employee of a campus police department of an institution of higher education; or

Sec. 106.04(b), A.B.C.

Sec. 106.04(e), A.B.C.

A minor is entitled to raise this defense only if the minor is in violation of this section at the time of the commission of the reported sexual assault. A minor who commits a sexual assault that is reported is not entitled to raise the defense. Secs. 106.04(e)-(g), A.B.C.

- (B) In the presence of an adult parent, guardian, or spouse; or
 - (C) In the immediate supervision of a commissioned peace officer engaged in enforcing the provisions of this code.
- (5) This offense does not apply to a minor who:
- (A) Requested emergency medical assistance in response to the possible alcohol overdose of the minor or another person;
 - (B) Was the first person to make a request for medical assistance;
 - (C) Remained on the scene until medical assistance arrived; and
 - (D) Cooperated with medical assistance and law enforcement personnel.
- (6) This offense does not apply to a minor who reports the sexual assault of the minor or another person, or is the victim of a sexual assault reported by another person, to:
- (A) a health care provider treating the victim of the sexual assault;
 - (B) an employee of a law enforcement agency, including an employee of a campus police department of an institution of higher education; or

Sec. 106.05(d), A.B.C.

A minor is entitled to raise this defense only if the minor is in violation of this section at the time of the commission of the reported sexual assault. A minor who commits a sexual assault that is reported is not entitled to raise the defense. Sec. 106.05(e)-(g), A.B.C.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (C) the Title IX coordinator of an institution of higher education or another employee of the institution responsible for responding to reports of sexual assault. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> f. Misrepresentation of Age by a Minor – Elements of this offense are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) A minor; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Falsely states; <input type="checkbox"/> (3) That he or she is 21 years of age or older; <input type="checkbox"/> (4) To a person selling or serving alcoholic beverages. | <p>Sec. 106.07, A.B.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> g. Public Intoxication – Elements of this offense are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Younger than 21 years of age (minor); <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Appears in a public place; <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Intoxicated to a degree that the person is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (A) A danger to themselves; or <input type="checkbox"/> (B) A danger to another. <input type="checkbox"/> (4) It is a defense to prosecution that the alcohol or other substance is administered for therapeutic purposes as part of medical treatment administered by a licensed physician. <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Upon conviction, punishment is in the same manner as if the minor committed an offense to which Section 106.071, A.B.C., applies. | <p>Sec. 49.02(e), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 49.02(a), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 49.02(b), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 49.02(e), P.C.</p> |

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Alcoholic Beverage Code

5. General Penalty Provision, Section 106.071, A.B.C.

Checklist 13-5	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Section 106.071, A.B.C., provides the punishment scheme for the following offenses:</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Purchase of Alcohol by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.02, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Attempt to Purchase Alcohol by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.025, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Consumption of Alcohol by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.04, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Possession of Alcohol by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.05, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> e. Misrepresentation of Age by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.07, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. FIRST CONVICTION: A charge is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor—maximum fine of \$500.</p>	<p>“You have been found guilty of the offense of _____ and the fine is assessed at \$ _____. In addition, you must pay court costs. Moreover, the court must require other sanctions.” See items below.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. In addition to assessing a fine for an offense under Section 106.071, A.B.C.; Public Intoxication Under the Age of 21 (Sec.49.02(e), P.C.); or for Driving or Operating a Watercraft Under the Influence of Alcohol by a Minor (Section 106.041, A.B.C.; See Checklist 13-6), the court is required to order:</p>	<p>Sec. 106.115, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Successful completion of an alcohol awareness or substance misuse education program regulated under Ch. 171, G.C.;</p>	<p>H.B. 1560 (87th Legislature) repealed DADAP from Sec. 106.115(a), A.B.C. and Sec. 1001.103, E.C., effective June 1, 2023.</p>

(1) If the defendant resides in a county with a population of 75,000 or less and access to an alcohol awareness program is not readily available in the county:

(A) The court may allow the defendant to take an online alcohol awareness program approved by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation;

(B) The court may require the defendant to perform not less than eight hours of community service related to alcohol abuse prevention or treatment instead of attending the alcohol awareness program.

(2) The minor has 90 days from the date of final conviction to submit to the court evidence of satisfactory completion of a court-ordered program.

(3) For good cause, the court may extend this period by not more than 90 days.

Sec. 106.115(b-1) A.B.C.

A defendant's residence is the one listed on the defendant's driver's license. If no driver's license or state ID, residence is that of defendant's voter registration certificate. If not registered to vote, the residence is that which is on file with the public school district. If not enrolled in public school, residence is determined by the court. The court may consider a defendant who is a college student to be a resident of the county where the college is, if the county offers readily available alcohol awareness classes. See Sec. 106.115(b-2), A.B.C.

Community service ordered under this subsection is in addition to community service ordered under Section 106.071(d).

Sec. 106.115(c), A.B.C.

"You have 90 days from today to submit to this court evidence of completion of the program ordered by the court."

"If you fail to submit the proper evidence within 90 days, this court will schedule a show cause hearing."

- ❑ (4) Failure by the defendant to present evidence of completion of an awareness program within the prescribed time period obligates the court to order the Department of Public Safety to suspend the defendant’s driver’s license or permit, or, if the defendant does not have a driver’s license or permit, to deny the issuance of a license or permit for a period not to exceed six months in either event.

- ❑ (5) If the minor fails to present evidence of completion of an alcohol awareness program, the court may order the parent or guardian of the minor to do any act or refrain from doing any act if the court determines that the doing or refraining from doing the act will increase the likelihood that the minor will complete the alcohol awareness course.

- ❑ (6) Court order on parents may be enforced by contempt.
 - ❑ (A) Punishment for the parents: up to three days in jail and a fine up to \$100.

- ❑ (7) If the defendant presents evidence of successful completion of the course in a timely manner, the court may reduce the assessed fine to an amount equal to no less than one-half of the amount of the initial fine.

“If the court determines that you did not have a good reason for not completing the alcohol awareness program and submitting evidence of completion within 90 days, I will order the Texas Department of Public Safety to suspend or deny issuance of your driver’s license for up to 180 days.” Sec. 106.115(d)(1)(A), A.B.C.

Sec. 106.115(d)(2), A.B.C.

Ex parte Powell, 883 S.W.2d 775 (Tex. App.—Beaumont 1994, no pet.); Sec. 21.002(c), G.C.

Sec. 106.115(c), A.B.C.

- b. Eight to 12 hours of alcohol-related community service; and

Sec. 106.071(e), A.B.C.

“In addition to the fine and alcohol awareness program, you must perform eight to 12 hours of community service (judge selects amount of hours between eight to 12 hours). You must complete the community service by _____.”

Community service ordered must be related to education about or prevention of misuse of alcohol or drugs if programs and services are available in the community. If educational programs and services are not available, the court may order community service that it considers appropriate for rehabilitative purposes.

- c. DPS to suspend or deny issuance of the minor’s DL or permit for 30 days.

“Also, I am going to order the Texas Department of Public Safety to suspend (or deny issuance of) your driver’s license for 30 days. The suspension is effective 11 days from today.” Sec. 106.071(h), A.B.C.

The judge should order the clerk to immediately send notice of the order to DPS.

- d. The court may also issue additional orders per Art. 45A.457, C.C.P.

- 4. **SUBSEQUENT CONVICTION:** A charge alleging a prior conviction is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor--maximum fine of \$500.

Sec. 106.071, A.B.C.

- a. The court is required to order:

(1) 20-40 hours of alcohol-related community service; and

(2) DPS to suspend or deny issuance of the minor's DL or permit for 60 days.

b. The court may, but is not required to, order an alcohol awareness program or a substance misuse education program.

However, if the court opts to order the defendant to attend a program and the defendant fails to provide proof of attending with the proscribed period, the court may either order the suspension of the defendant's driver's license or permit for a period not to exceed one year or, if the defendant does not have a license or permit, may deny the issuance of a license or a permit for a period not to exceed one year.

c. The court may also issue additional orders per Art. 45.057/45A.457, C.C.P.

Community service ordered must be related to education about or prevention of misuse of alcohol if programs and services are available in the community. If educational programs and services are not available, the court may order community service that it considers appropriate for rehabilitative purposes.

The driver's license suspension takes effect on the 11th day after the date the minor is convicted. Sec. 106.071(h), A.B.C. The judge should order the clerk to immediately send notice of the order to DPS.

If the court requires the minor to attend a court-ordered program, the court may require that the parent or guardian of the minor attend the program when the minor is younger than 18 years of age. Sec. 106.115(a-2), A.B.C.

Sec. 106.115(d)(1)(B), A.B.C.

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| <p>❑ 5. ENHANCEMENT TO CLASS B MISDEMEANOR: If it is shown at trial that a minor (17 to 20 years of age) has two prior convictions under this section, the offense is punishable by a fine of not less than \$250 or more than \$2,000; confinement in jail of not more than 180 days; or both fine and confinement; plus 180 days suspension or denial of DL or permit.</p> | <p>Sec. 106.071(c) and (d), A.B.C.</p> |
| <p>❑ 6. MANDATORY TRANSFER TO JUVENILE COURT: If a person is under 17 years of age and has two prior convictions under this section, then the court must transfer the case to juvenile court.</p> | <p>Sec. 51.08, F.C.
An exception is made in Section 51.08(d), F.C., for courts that have created juvenile case managers under Article 45.056/45A.451, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>❑ 7. WHAT IS CONSIDERED A CONVICTION: For purposes of determining whether a minor has been previously convicted:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">❑ a. An adjudication under Title 3, F.C., that the minor engaged in DUI is considered a conviction; and</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">❑ b. An order of deferred disposition for an offense alleging DUI is considered a conviction.</p> | <p>Sec. 106.071(f), A.B.C.</p> |
| <p>❑ 8. DEFERRED DISPOSITION: If a court grants deferred disposition, the court, in addition to any other term ordered under Article 45.051/Subchapter G of Chapter 45A, C.C.P., must require the minor to:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">❑ a. Attend an alcohol awareness program or substance misuse education program; and</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">❑ b. Perform eight to 40 hours of community service.</p> | <p>Sec. 106.115, A.B.C.</p> <p>Sec. 106.071, A.B.C.</p> |
| <p>❑ 9. Minors convicted of or arrested for an Alcoholic Beverage Code status offense may request an expunction.</p> | <p>Sec. 106.12, A.B.C.
See Checklist 13-21.</p> |

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Alcoholic Beverage Code

6. Specific Penalty Provision, Section 106.041, A.B.C. – Operating Motor Vehicle Under Influence of Alcohol by a Minor (DUI/BWI)

With two notable exceptions, adjudicating an allegation of Section 106.041, A.B.C., generally follows the provisions of Section 106.071, A.B.C. (See Checklist 13-5). However, because operation of a motor vehicle by a minor with any detectable amount of alcohol in the minor’s system is, as a matter of public policy, considered an “at-risk” behavior and potentially a gateway to more dangerous criminal behavior, Texas law (1) proscribes more community service than for other Chapter 106 offenses, and (2) makes suspension of driving privileges a separate administrative matter.

Checklist 13-6	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Section 106.041, A.B.C., provides the punishment for Driving or Operating Watercraft Under the Influence of Alcohol by a Minor.</p>	<p>Sec. 106.041, A.B.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. FIRST CONVICTION: Punishable as a Class C misdemeanor—maximum fine of \$500.</p>	<p>“You have been found guilty of the offense of driving under the influence and the fine is assessed at \$ _____. In addition, you must pay court costs. Moreover, the court must require other sanctions.” See items below.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. In addition to a court-ordered program (see Checklist 3-6), the court is required to order 20-40 hours of alcohol-related community service.</p>	<p>Sec. 171.0001, G.C. Sec. 106.115, A.B.C. “In addition to the fine and alcohol awareness program, you must perform 20 to 40 hours community service (judge selects amount of hours). You must complete the community service by _____.”</p> <p>Community service ordered must be related to education about or prevention of misuse of alcohol.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The court has no authority to order DPS to suspend or deny issuance of the DL.</p>	<p>An administrative DL suspension is conducted in the same manner as DWI offenders.</p> <p>See Chapters 524 and 724, T.C.</p>

- ❑ 3. SUBSEQUENT CONVICTION: A charge alleging a prior conviction is punishable as a Class C misdemeanor—maximum fine of \$500.
 - ❑ a. The court is required to order 40-60 hours of alcohol-related community service.

Community service ordered must be related to education about or prevention of misuse of alcohol.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Health & Safety Code

Section 161.257, H.S.C., provides that Title 3, F.C., does not apply to a proceeding under Chapter 161, Subchapter N (Tobacco Use by Minors), H.S.C. This means that minors charged with tobacco offenses may not be transferred to juvenile court.

7. Tobacco Offenses Committed by Minor

Checklist 13-7	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>Section 161.251, H.S.C., incorporates the definitions of “cigarette,” “e-cigarette,” and “tobacco product” found in the Tax Code and elsewhere in the Health and Safety Code.</p> <p>“Cigarette” is defined in Section 154.001, Tax Code, as a roll for smoking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) that is made of tobacco or tobacco mixed with another ingredient and wrapped or covered with a material other than tobacco; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) that is not a cigar. <p>“E-cigarette” is defined in Section 161.081, H.S.C., as an electronic cigarette or any other device that simulates smoking by using a mechanical heating element, battery or electronic circuit to deliver nicotine or other substances to the individual inhaling from the device or a consumable liquid solution or other material aerosolized or vaporized during its use. The term does not include a prescription medical device unrelated to the cessation of smoking. The term includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) a device described by this subdivision regardless of whether the device is manufactured, distributed, or sold as an e-cigarette, e-cigar, or e-pipe or under another product name or description; and <input type="checkbox"/> (2) a component, part, or accessory for the device, regardless of whether the component, part, or accessory is sold separately from the device. <p>“Tobacco product” is defined in Section 155.001, Tax Code, as:</p>	

- (1) a cigar;
 - (2) smoking tobacco, including granulated, plug-cut, crimp-cut, ready-rubbed, and any form of tobacco suitable for smoking in a pipe or as a cigarette;
 - (3) chewing tobacco, including Cavendish, Twist, plug, scrap, and any kind of tobacco suitable for chewing;
 - (4) snuff or other preparations of pulverized tobacco; or
 - (5) an article or product that is made of tobacco or a tobacco substitute and that is not a cigarette.
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- 1. Before proceeding with this Checklist, see Chapter 4 and Checklist 13-1 for general procedures, rights, and pleas.
 - 2. A person must be younger than 21 years of age to commit the offenses described in Section 161.252, H.S.C. Sec. 161.252(a), H.S.C.
 - 3. Identify the code provision that is alleged to have been violated. Sec. 161.252(a)(1), H.S.C.
 - a. Possession, Purchase, Consumption, or Acceptance of Cigarettes, E-cigarettes, or Tobacco Products by a Minor – Elements of this offense are:
 - (1) an individual younger than 21;
 - (select one):*
 - (2) possesses;
 - (3) purchases;
 - (4) consumes; or
 - (5) accepts

(select one):

- (A) a cigarette; or
- (B) an e-cigarette; or
- (C) a tobacco product (specify the product).

- b. False Proof of Age by a Minor to Obtain Cigarette, E-cigarette, or Tobacco Product – Elements of this offense are:

- (1) an individual younger than 21;
- (2) falsely represents himself or herself to be 21 or older;
- (3) by displaying a proof of age that is false;
- (4) in order to *(select one)*:
 - (A) obtain possession of;
 - (B) purchase; or
 - (C) receive

(select one):

- (i) a cigarette; or
- (ii) an e-cigarette; or
- (iii) a tobacco product (specify the product).

- c. Exceptions:

- (1) It is an exception if the defendant is in the presence of an employer, if possession or receipt is required as part of defendant’s duties as an employee.

Sec. 161.252(a)(2), H.S.C.

The employee exception applies only to possession or receipt by a minor. Sec. 161.252(b)(2), H.S.C.

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| (2) | It is an exception if the defendant is participating in an inspection or test of compliance in accordance with Section 161.088, H.S.C. | This is sometimes known as “the minor sting operation” exception and applies to all Section 161.252 offenses. Sec. 161.252(c), H.S.C. |
| (3) | It is an exception if the defendant is at least 18 years of age and presents at the time of purchase a valid military identification card of the United States military forces or the state military forces. | Sec, 161.252(c-1), H.S.C. |
| (1) | On subsequent conviction: Case not dismissed, but judge has discretion to reduce fine to not less than half the fine imposed. | Sec. 161.253(f)(1), H.S.C. |

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Health & Safety Code

8. Penalties for Tobacco Use by Minors. Section 161.253, H.S.C.

Checklist 13-8	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Section 161.253, H.S.C., provides the punishments for tobacco offenses committed by persons under the age of 21.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A conviction is punishable by a fine not to exceed \$100.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.252(d), H.S.C. “You have been found guilty of the offense of _____. I am assessing a fine in the amount of \$_____.”</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The court is required to:</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253, H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Suspend execution of sentence; and</p>	<p>“I am going to suspend execution of the sentence, which means that I am not going to require you to pay the fine. However, you must pay court costs.”</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Order attendance at an e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(b), H.S.C. “I am going to require you to attend an e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program (or perform eight to 12 hours of tobacco related community service). You have 90 days to attend the program (or perform the community service) and submit evidence to me that you completed the program.”</p> <p>Defendant may request an e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program be taught in a language other than English.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Determine if an e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program approved by the Texas Department of State Health Services is readily available where defendant resides.</p>	<p>Call the Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control, Texas Department of State Health Services, at 800.345.8647 for a list of approved providers.</p>

<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. If approved e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program is available, order defendant to complete program by the 90th day after conviction.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(a) and (e), H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> e. If e-cigarett and tobacco awareness program is not readily available, order defendant to complete eight to 12 hours of e-cigarette and tobacco-related community service by the 90th day after conviction.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(c) and (e), H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> f. Court may order parent or guardian to attend e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program with the defendant.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(a), H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> g. Defendant to present to court, in the manner required by the court, evidence of completion of the awareness course or of the community service.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(e), H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> h. If defendant presents evidence on time:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(1) On first conviction: Judge shall dismiss the case.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(2) On subsequent conviction: Case not dismissed, but judge has discretion to reduce fine to not less than half the fine imposed.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.253(f)(2), H.S.C. “If you complete the e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program and present evidence of completion within 90 days from today, I will dismiss your case.”</p> <p>“If you do not present this court with evidence of completion of the program, I will enter a final judgment and assess a fine of \$_____.”</p> <p>Sec. 161.253(f)(1), H.S.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The court may also order a sanction under Section 45.057/45A.457, C.C.P.</p>	<p>See Checklist 13-14.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Minors convicted of a status tobacco offense may apply to the court to have the conviction expunged on or after their 21st birthday.</p>	<p>Sec. 161.255, H.S.C. See Checklist 13-23.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Penal Code Offenses and Other Fine-Only Misdemeanors

9. Offenses

Checklist 13-9	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Before proceeding with this Checklist, see Chapter 4 and Checklist 13-1 for general procedures, rights, and pleas.<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Identify the Penal Code offense alleged to have been violated.<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Municipal courts have jurisdiction over all fine-only offenses (Class C misdemeanors) in the Penal Code, other state codes, and local ordinances.	

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Penal Code Offenses and Other Fine-Only Misdemeanors

10. Penalties

Checklist 13-10	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Fine-only offenses in the Penal Code are called Class C misdemeanors and have a maximum fine of \$500.</p>	<p>Sec. 12.23, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Outside the Penal Code, offenses are classified as Class C misdemeanors if the offense is punishable by fine only.</p>	<p>Sec. 12.41, P.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. In addition to the fine, upon conviction, the court may order a sanction under Section 45A.457, C.C.P.</p>	<p>See Checklist 13-14.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. A child charged with a Class C misdemeanor Penal Code offense has a right to expunction.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.463, C.C.P. See Checklist 13-20.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A warning letter to be issued to the child and the child’s parent or guardian that specifically states the child’s alleged school offense and explains the consequences if the child engages in additional misconduct;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A behavior contract with the child that must be signed by the child, the child’s parent or guardian, and an employee of the school and that includes a specific description of the behavior that is required or prohibited for the child and the penalties for additional alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action or the filing of a complaint in a criminal court;</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The performance of school-based community service by the child; and</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The referral of the child to counseling, community-based services, or other in-school or out-of-school services aimed at addressing the child’s behavioral problems.</p>	<p>A referral to counseling may include participation by the child’s parent or guardian if necessary. Sec. 37.144(b), E.C.</p>

- e. Disruption of Transportation; and

- f. Pledging or soliciting another to pledge to a public school fraternity, sorority, secret society, or gang that is not sanctioned by the statute or state or national authorities.

This offense cannot be committed by a primary or secondary grade student. Sec. 37.126, E.C.

Sec. 37.121, E.C.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Education Code Offenses

11. Criminal Procedure for School Offenses

Under Section 37.141, E.C., Subchapter E-1 of Chapter 37 of the Education Code (Criminal Procedure) governs criminal procedures to be utilized when a child is alleged to have committed an offense on property under the control and jurisdiction of a school district which is a Class C misdemeanor, excluding traffic offenses. The goal of this subchapter is to preserve judicial resources for students who are most in need of formal adjudication.

Checklist 13-11	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>“Child” is a person who is at least 10 years of age and younger than 18 years of age, who is charged with or convicted of an offense that a justice or municipal court has jurisdiction of, and who is a student.</p>	<p>Sec. 37.141(1), E.C.</p>
<p>“School offense” is an offense committed by a child enrolled in a public school that is a Class C misdemeanor other than a traffic offense and that is committed on property under the control and jurisdiction of a school district.</p>	<p>Sec. 37.141(1), E.C</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. To the extent of any conflict, this subchapter controls over any other law applied to a school offense alleged to have been committed by a child.</p>	<p>Sec. 37.142, E.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Outside A peace officer may not issue a citation to a child who is alleged to have committed a school offense</p>	<p>Sec. 37.143(a), E.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Subchapter E-1 does not prohibit a child from being taken into custody under Section 52.01,</p>	<p>Sec. 37.143(b), E.C.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Education Code Offenses

12. Offenses

Checklist 13-12	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Before proceeding with this Checklist, see Chapter 4 and Checklist 13-1 for general procedures, rights, and pleas.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Identify the Education Code offense alleged to have been violated.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. The following offenses may be violated under the Education Code:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Rules Enacted by School Board (related to the operation of vehicles and parking on school property);</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Trespass on School Grounds;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. Possession of Intoxicants on School Grounds;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. Disruption of Classes;</p>	<p>H.B. 2398 (84th Legislature) repealed Failure to Attend School and designated justice, municipal, and certain county courts as truancy courts, having original, exclusive jurisdiction over allegations of truant conduct, handled as civil cases under Title 3A of the Family Code.</p> <p>Sec. 37.102, E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.107, E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.122, E.C. It is a defense to prosecution under this section that the person possessed the intoxicating beverage at a performing arts facility during an event held outside of regular school hours and not sponsored or sanctioned by a school district. Sec. 37.122(a-1), E.C.</p> <p>This offense cannot be committed by a primary or secondary grade student enrolled at the school. Sec. 37.124, E.C.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Education Code Offenses

13. Penalties and Orders

Checklist 13-13	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. The following offenses are Class C misdemeanors with a maximum fine of \$500:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Rules enacted by School Board Relating to Traffic; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Trespass on School Grounds; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Possession of Intoxicants on School Grounds; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Disruption of Classes; <input type="checkbox"/> e. Disruption of Transportation; <input type="checkbox"/> f. Pledging or soliciting another to pledge to a public school fraternity, sorority, secret society, or gang that is not sanctioned by the statute or state or national authorities; and <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A child charged with an Education Code offense has a right to an expunction under Article 45A.463, C.C.P.</p>	<p>Sec. 37.102, E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.107, E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.122(c), E.C</p> <p>Sec. 37.124(b), E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.126(b), E.C.</p> <p>Sec. 37.121(2)(c), E.C.</p> <p>See Checklist 13-20.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

14. Additional Optional Orders

While deferred disposition allows courts to impose conditions as terms of probation, Article 45A.457, C.C.P., provides a “laundry list” of orders that can be imposed on any child upon conviction.

Checklist 13-14	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. In addition to any fine and upon finding that the child committed a fine-only misdemeanor, the municipal or justice court may:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Refer the child or the child’s parents, managing conservators, or guardians for services under Section 264.302, F.C.; or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Order parent to refrain from conduct that may encourage the child to violate court order.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Parent may be ordered to attend a parenting class or a parental responsibility program.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Require that the child attend a special program that the court determines to be in the best interest of the child. Programs include:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Rehabilitation;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Counseling;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Self-esteem and leadership;</p>	<p>Art. 45A.457, C.C.P. “In addition to the fine that I have already assessed, I am going to require you (or you and your parents) to _____. This must be completed by _____.”</p> <p>Art. 45A.457(b)(3), C.C.P. Any order for a parent should be included in the child’s judgment. The court should inform the parent of the consequences of not complying — contempt with a maximum fine of \$100 and/or up to three days in jail. See Chapter 14 of this book concerning contempt.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Work and job skills training; <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Job interviewing and work preparation; <input type="checkbox"/> (6) Self-improvement; <input type="checkbox"/> (7) Parenting; <input type="checkbox"/> (8) Manners; <input type="checkbox"/> (9) Violence avoidance; <input type="checkbox"/> (10) Tutoring; <input type="checkbox"/> (11) Sensitivity training; <input type="checkbox"/> (12) Parental responsibility; <input type="checkbox"/> (13) Community service; <input type="checkbox"/> (14) Restitution; <input type="checkbox"/> (15) Advocacy; and <input type="checkbox"/> (16) A mentoring program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> e. If the program involves the expenditure of municipal or county funds, it must be approved by the governing body of the municipality or county commissioners court. Art. 45A.457(b)(2), C.C.P. <input type="checkbox"/> f. The court may not order a parent, managing conservator, or guardian of a child to pay an amount greater than \$100 for the costs of the program. Art. 45A.457(c), C.C.P. <input type="checkbox"/> g. The court may require that a person required to attend this program submit proof of attendance to the court. Art. 45A.457(d), C.C.P. <input type="checkbox"/> h. A municipal or justice court shall endorse on the summons issued to a parent, managing conservator, or a guardian an order to personally appear at the hearing with the child. Art. 45A.457(e), C.C.P. |
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- i. An order under this section involving a child is enforceable as contempt under Article 45A.461, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.457(f), C.C.P.
See Checklist 13-26.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

15. Difficulty or Default in Payment of Fine

Checklist 13-15	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. If the defendant notifies the judge that the defendant has difficulty paying the fine and costs in compliance with the judgment, the judge shall hold a reconsideration of satisfaction hearing to determine whether the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant. The defendant may notify the judge by voluntarily appearing in court, filing a motion, mailing a letter, or any other method established by the judge.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the judge determines at the hearing that the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant, the justice or judge shall consider whether to allow the defendant to satisfy the fine and costs through one or more methods listed under Article 45A.252(b).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The judge may decline to hold the hearing if the judge:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) previously held a hearing under that subsection with respect to the case and is able to determine without holding a hearing that the judgment does not impose an undue hardship on the defendant; or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) is able to determine without holding a hearing that the judgment imposes an undue hardship on the defendant and the fine and costs should be satisfied through one or more methods listed under Article 45A.252(b).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The justice or judge retains jurisdiction for the purpose of making a determination under this article.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.258, C.C.P.</p> <p>This reconsideration hearing was created by the Legislature in 2019, and judges may allow a defendant to appear by telephone or videoconference if a personal appearance would impose an undue hardship. Arts. 45A.260 and 45A.258, C.C.P.</p>

2. Default in payment of fines

- a. In no event, after conviction or plea of guilty and imposition of fine, may a child be committed to any jail in default of payment of any fine or costs.
- b. The court may consider contempt when a child fails to pay a fine or violates a court order. (These rules apply even if the child has turned age 17 before the contempt hearing is conducted, or if the child turned age 17 and then failed to pay.)
- c. Court must schedule a contempt hearing and give the child an opportunity to be heard.
- d. Court may waive payment of all or part of a fine imposed on a defendant if the court determines that:
 - (1) Defendant is indigent or was, at the time the offense was committed, a child; and
 - (2) Discharging the fine through community service or tutoring would impose an undue hardship on the defendant.
- e. Court may waive of all or part of the costs imposed if the court determines that:
 - (1) Defendant is indigent or does not have sufficient income to pay all or part of the costs; or
 - (2) Defendant was a child (under 17) at the time the offense was committed.

Art. 45A.461, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.461, C.C.P.

Article 45A.259(h)(3), C.C.P., requires courts to proceed under Article 45A.461, C.C.P., to compel the person to discharge the judgment before issuing a capias pro fine. See Checklist 13-20.

Art. 45A.461(c), C.C.P.
See Checklist 13-25 for contempt procedures.

Art. 45A.257(a), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.257(b), C.C.P.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

16. Failure to Appear

Checklist 13-16	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A justice or municipal court may not order the confinement of a child for the failure to appear for an offense committed by the child.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.461, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. If the parent(s) does not appear:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Determine if the parent(s) has been served with a summons. If not, reset the case.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. If the parent(s) has been served with a summons but failed to appear, the court may waive the requirement of the presence of the parents, guardian, or managing conservator if, after diligent effort, the court cannot locate them or compel their presence.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If the parent(s) was served with a summons, the prosecutor may charge the parent(s) with a Class C misdemeanor for failure to appear in court with child. (Maximum fine \$500).</p>	<p>If the court waives this requirement, the court should document the actions taken in an effort to compel the parent’s presence in the defendant’s file.</p> <p>Arts 45A.452(e), C.C.P. and 45A.457(g), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. If child does not appear for a traffic offense, the court shall:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Report to the Department of Public Safety any minor charged with a traffic offense who does not appear.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A court that has filed a report under this section shall report to the Department of Public Safety on final disposition of the case.</p>	<p>Sec. 521.3452, T.C.</p> <p>Sec. 521.3452, T.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. If a child fails to appear for any offense other than traffic, the court may:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Report to the Department of Public Safety any minor charged with an offense other than traffic who does not appear.</p>	<p>Secs. 521.201 and 521.294, T.C.</p>

- b. A court that has filed a report under this section shall report to the Department of Public Safety on final disposition of the case.
- 5. General procedure when a child fails to appear:
 - a. A court should issue an order for nonsecure custody for the child.

Secs. 521.201 and 521.294, T.C

Arts. 45A.453, 45A.454, and 45A.455, C.C.P.

Article 45A.456, C.C.P., requires the court to have used all available procedures in Chapter 45 to secure the appearance of the child before issuing a warrant of arrest when the child turns age 17.

See Checklist 13-17 for nonsecure custody.

See Checklist 13-19 for information regarding a juvenile who has failed to appear and then turns age 17.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

17. Children Taken into Custody – General Procedures

While only a juvenile court may issue a directive to apprehend (Sec. 52.015, F.C.), children accused of criminal behavior may be taken into custody “pursuant to the laws of arrest.” Sec. 52.01, F.C. Because Class C misdemeanors are an exception to the general rule that children do not belong in the criminal justice system, Chapter 45A, C.C.P., contains provisions for taking children into custody accused of fine-only offenses.

The following procedures place the responsibility of ensuring compliance with this section on the peace officer who takes into custody a person under 17 years of age.

Checklist 13-17	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A peace officer who takes into custody a person under the age of 17 for an act committed prior to becoming 17 years of age shall take the person to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. A place of nonsecure custody, unless the child is released to a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The municipal court.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.453, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The place of nonsecure custody must be:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Designated as such by the head of the law enforcement agency having custody of the person;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Unlocked;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. A multipurpose area; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> d. Not used as a secure detention area or part of a secure detention area.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.453, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. A place of nonsecure custody must observe the following procedures:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. A child may not be secured physically to a cuffing rail, chair, desk, or other stationary object.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.453, C.C.P.</p>

- b. The child may be held in the nonsecure facility only long enough to accomplish the purpose of:
 - (1) Identification;
 - (2) Investigation;
 - (3) Processing;
 - (4) Release to parents; or
 - (5) The arranging of transportation to the appropriate juvenile court, juvenile detention facility, municipal court, or justice court.
- c. Residential use of the area is prohibited.
- d. The child shall be under continuous visual supervision by a law enforcement officer or facility staff person during the time the child is in nonsecure custody.
- e. The child may not be detained in a place of nonsecure custody for more than six hours.
- 4. A child taken into custody for an offense that a municipal court has jurisdiction of may be released to the child's parent, guardian, custodian, or other responsible adult as provided in Section 52.02(a) (1), F.C.
- 5. A child cannot be incarcerated for contempt. For details about contempt for juveniles see Checklists 13-16, 13-20, and 13-26.
- 6. If the judge sees the child, the judge may handle all charges against the child.

Art. 45A.453, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

18. Unadjudicated Children, Now Adults (No Appearance Made)

Checklist 13-18	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Procedures when child turns age 17:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Court issues a notice of continuing obligation to appear by personal service or by mail to the last known address and residence of the individual. Notice contains an order to appear.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Court gives notice to a peace officer to serve either in person or by mail at the last known address on file with the court.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If child now an adult appears:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Court proceeds to handle all cases filed against the 17 year old.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Court should explain charges, pleas, and rights.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The child now an adult fails to appear in response to the notice and order to appear.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Prosecutor files a sworn complaint charging the offense of Violation of Continuing Obligation to Appear (VCOA) as ordered by the notice. (Not to be confused with Section 38.10, P.C., offense of Failure to Appear.)</p>	<p>An individual may not be taken into secured custody for offenses alleged to have occurred before the individual's 17th birthday except an individual under the age of 17 may be taken into nonsecure custody as allowed by Articles 45A.453, 45A.454, and 45A.455, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45.060/45A.456, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45.202/45A.103, C.C.P. If defendant is convicted and peace officer served notice, court must assess \$35 reimbursement fee under Art. 102.011, C.C.P.</p> <p>See Checklist 13-1. See Chapter 4 in this book.</p> <p>Sec. 45A.456(c), C.C.P.</p>

- (2) Court orders a warrant prepared for issuance only for the VCOA as ordered by the notice. (Court must also have a probable cause affidavit before issuing the warrant.)

- 2. Procedures when child now an adult is arrested:
 - a. Court should explain charges, pleas, and rights.

 - b. Court proceeds to handle all cases filed against the 17 year old, including all the cases that were filed while the individual was under the age of 17.

 - c. For the penalties, see the applicable Checklist for that offense in this chapter.

Court may not issue warrants on the charges filed while the individual was under the age of 17. Art. 45A.456, C.C.P.

When a warrant is processed or served by a peace officer, the court must assess a \$75 warrant reimbursement fee. Art. 102.011, C.C.P.

See Checklist 13-1.
See Chapter 4 in this book.

It is an affirmative defense to prosecution for the charge of violation of continuing obligation to appear as ordered by the notice if the individual was not informed of the individual's obligation to notify the court of a current address within seven days of moving. Art. 45A.456(d), C.C.P.

If the individual fails to pay, see Checklist 13-20.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

19. Children Now Adults Who Fail to Pay

Checklist 13-19	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. When a child now an adult (at least age 17) fails to pay:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A <i>capias pro fine</i> may not be issued for an individual convicted for an offense committed before the individual’s 17th birthday unless:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) The individual is 17 years of age or older;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) The court finds that the issuance of the <i>capias pro fine</i> is justified after considering:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (A) The sophistication and maturity of the individual;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (B) The criminal record and history of the individual; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (C) The reasonable likelihood of bringing about the discharge of the judgment through the use of procedures and services currently available to the court; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The court has satisfied the requirements of Article 45A.461, C.C.P.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. If the court finds that the issuance of a <i>capias pro fine</i> is not justified, the court may still issue an order for nonsecure custody for the child who is now an adult.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.259(h), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.259(h)(1), C.C.P.</p> <p>45A.259(h)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>45A.259(h)(3), C.C.P. See Checklist 13-16.</p> <p>Art. 45A.259(i), C.C.P. See Checklist 13-18.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Expunction

20. Expunction Under Article 45A.463, C.C.P.

Checklist 13-20	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Determine if the offense is covered by Article 45A.463, C.C.P.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Article 45A.463, C.C.P., applies to offenses described by Sections 8.07(a)(4) and (5) and 43.261, P.C.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. These offenses include Penal Code offenses and Education Code offenses except failure to attend school, and penal ordinance offenses.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.463(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>Transportation Code offenses and traffic ordinances are an exception to this expunction provision.</p> <p>Article 45A.463, C.C.P., does not apply to status offenses under the Alcoholic Beverage Code. They have a separate provision in Section 106.12, A.B.C. See Checklist 13-22.</p> <p>Art. 45A.463, C.C.P., does not apply to status offenses under the Health and Safety Code. They have a separate provision in Section 161.252, H.S.C. See Checklist 13-23.</p> <p>Article 45A.463, C.C.P., does not apply to the Failure to Attend School offense. It has a separate provision in Article 45A.464, C.C.P. See Checklist 13-14.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Article 45.0216/45A.463, C.C.P., applies also to a conviction and dismissal pursuant to Chapter 45A (deferred disposition) or Article 45A.401 (teen court) for defendants under the age of 17.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.463(f), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. All eligible defendants and any parents must be informed in open court of their rights and provided with a copy of Article 45A.463, C.C.P.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.463(f), C.C.P. “You have the right to request the court to expunge the offense of _____.”</p> <p>Here is a copy of the law regarding your right to expunction. Please take time to read this information.”</p>

- 4. Eligibility requirements:
 - a. Defendant must not have been convicted of more than one offense covered by these provisions;
 - b. Defendant must be at least 17 years of age; and
 - c. Offense must have been committed before turning 17.

- 5. Procedures are instigated by request of the defendant:
 - a. In writing;
 - b. Identifying the case to be expunged;
 - c. Stating that the person has not been convicted of another offense under these provisions; and
 - d. Made under oath.

- 6. The court shall require a person who requests expunction under this article to pay a reimbursement fee in the amount of \$30 to defray the cost of notifying state agencies of orders of expunction.

- 7. The provisions do not require notice or a hearing.

- 8. If the court finds the person was not convicted of any other covered offense while the person was a child, the court shall order the following items expunged:
 - a. Conviction;
 - b. Complaints;
 - c. Verdicts;
 - d. Sentences;
 - e. Prosecutorial records;

Art. 45A.463(j), C.C.P.

Art. 45A.463(g), C.C.P.

- f. Law enforcement records; and
- g. Any other documents related to the offense.
- 9. Order the appropriate entities to return the relevant records to the court or to destroy them.
- 10. Give the order to the clerk to serve on the appropriate entities.
- 11. Destroy the records and delete computer references.
- 12. Further order that the person is released from all disabilities resulting from the conviction and that the conviction may not be shown or made known.
- 13. Provide a copy of the order to the movant/defendant.
- 14. Seal the order and make no computer or index reference to it.

The order should contain a list of agencies, officials, and persons who are subject to the order. The clerk sends by certified mail/return receipt a copy of the order to all that are subject to the order.

- 3. The court may, but does not have to, conduct a hearing in open court. The court, upon finding that the applicant's statement is true (statement that they had only one conviction or were arrested for only one event), shall prepare an order that requires all disabilities resulting from the conviction be removed from the applicant's record.
- 4. Order the appropriate entities to return the relevant records to the court or to destroy them.
- 5. Give the clerk the order to serve.
- 6. Destroy the records and delete computer references.
- 7. Further order that the person is released from all disabilities resulting from the conviction and that the conviction may not be shown or made known.
- 8. Provide a copy of the order to the movant/defendant.
- 9. Seal the order and make no computer or index reference to it.

If the event leading to a violation of the Alcoholic Beverage Code included multiple violations during this event, all violations from this event are eligible for expunction. Sec. 106.12(d), A.B.C.

The order should contain a list of agencies, officials, and persons who are subject to the order. The clerk sends by certified mail/return receipt a copy of the order to all that are subject to the order. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order for Expunction of Records: Alcoholic Beverage Code Offenses*

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Expunction

22. Expunction of Status Tobacco Offenses

Checklist 13-22	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. An individual convicted for an offense under Section 161.252, H.S.C., may apply to court to have conviction expunged.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Defendant must apply to court on or after the individual’s 21st Birthday;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Court must find defendant satisfactorily completed tobacco awareness program or tobacco-related community service ordered by the court; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The court shall require a person who requests expunction under this article to pay a fee in the amount of \$30 to defray the cost of notifying state agencies of orders of expunction.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. If above satisfied, court shall order that the conviction may not be shown or made known for any purpose and order the following expunged from the record:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Conviction;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Complaint;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Verdict;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Sentence; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. Any other document relating to the offense.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Mail certified copies of order to:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Alcohol awareness course provider; or</p>	<p>Sec. 161.255, H.S.C.</p> <p>There is no requirement that defendant have only one conviction under Section 161.252 to qualify for expunction.</p> <p>General expunction procedures found in Article 45A.463, C.C.P., do not apply to tobacco violations</p>

- b. Community services provider; and
- c. Chief of your city's police department.

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Expunction

23. Expunction Procedures for Truancy Offenses

H.B. 2398 (84th Legislature) repealed the offense of Failure to Attend School along with former Articles 45.054 and 45.055 of the Code of Criminal Procedure related to the expunction of Failure to Attend School offenses. Article 45A.464, C.C.P., provides that an individual who has been convicted of the former offense of Failure to Attend School, or who has had a complaint dismissed, is entitled to an expunction, regardless whether the person petitions for the expunction. No expunction fee authorized.

Checklist 13-23	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. An individual who has been convicted of a truancy offense or has had a complaint for a truancy offense dismissed is entitled to have the conviction or complaint and records relating to the conviction or complaint expunged.</p>	<p>A “truancy offense” means a Failure to Attend School offense. Art. 45A.464(a), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. A petition for expunction is not required.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.464(b), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. A court in which an individual was convicted or a complaint for a truancy offense was filed shall order the following related to the offense to be expunged from the person’s record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Convictions; <input type="checkbox"/> b. Complaints; <input type="checkbox"/> c. Verdicts; <input type="checkbox"/> d. Sentences; <input type="checkbox"/> e. Prosecutorial records; <input type="checkbox"/> f. School Records; <input type="checkbox"/> g. Any other documents relating to the offense. 	<p>Art. 45A.464(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. After entry of the order, the individual is released from all disabilities resulting from the conviction or complaint, and the conviction or complaint may not be shown or made known for any purpose.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.464(d), C.C.P., C.C.P.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Historically, criminal records involving children in municipal courts were treated as adult records, while juvenile court records were confidential. Over time, the Legislature moved toward greater confidentiality for children charged in criminal courts. Most recently, the law has shifted from conditional confidentiality to confidentiality upon charging for Class C misdemeanors, other than traffic offenses. Effective December 4, 2025, new Section 58.010 of the Family Code further advances this approach by making arrest warrants issued for a child, and the complaints or affidavits supporting those warrants, confidential, subject to limited disclosure as provided by statute.

24. Confidentiality

Checklist 13-24	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Except as authorized to notify schools under Art. 15.27 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the exceptions below, all records and files, including those held by law enforcement and information stored by electronic means or otherwise from which a record or file could be generated relating to a child who is (1) charged with, (2) convicted of, (3) found not guilty of, (4) had a charge dismissed for, or (5) is granted deferred disposition for a fine-only offense other than a traffic offense, are confidential and may not be disclosed to the public.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.462(b), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Information subject to confidentiality may be open to inspection only by:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Judges or court staff;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A criminal justice agency for criminal justice purposes;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. The Department of Public Safety;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. An attorney for a party to the proceeding;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. The child defendant; or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> f. The defendant’s parent, guardian, or managing conservator.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.462(c), C.C.P.</p> <p>See Sec. 411.082, G.C.</p>

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

25. Juvenile Contempt

Article 45A.461, C.C.P. gives municipal and justice courts two distinct options when dealing with children who do not comply with court orders. The first option is to refer the child to juvenile court for delinquent conduct. Art. 45A.461(c)(1). The second option is to retain the matter and proceed to conduct a contempt hearing. Art. 45A.461(c)(2).

Checklist 13-25	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Court gives the child notice of the hearing.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.461(c), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Court issues a summons for the parent(s) to appear with the child.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the child appears, court conducts a hearing; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. Parent(s) must appear with child. If summons has been served and parent fails to appear, court may waive presence of parent; if summons has not been served, reset hearing.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.452(b)(1)(B), C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Explain to the child why the court is conducting the hearing, the consequences of waiving jurisdiction, and the consequences of retaining jurisdiction.</p>	<p>“If I determine that your actions constitute contempt and I decide to keep jurisdiction over you, I can assess a fine of up to \$500. This is in addition to the fines that you still owe this court. Also, I can order the Texas Department of Public Safety to suspend or deny issuance of your driver’s license until you have completely complied with all of this court’s orders.”</p> <p>“If I decide to transfer you to the juvenile court, this conduct is considered delinquent conduct by the juvenile court.”</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Court decides whether to transfer the child to juvenile court or to retain jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Art. 45A.461(c)(1), C.C.P.</p>

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. If the court transfers the child to juvenile court, further action against the child ceases in municipal court. (The child is still liable for payment of the fine on the original charge(s).)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. If the court retains jurisdiction, the court may:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Find the child in contempt and order the child to pay a fine of up to \$500; and/or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Order DPS to suspend or deny issuance of the child's driver's license.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. If the child turns age 17 before paying the fine, see Checklist 13-19.</p> | <p>Art. 45A.461(c)(1), C.C.P.
The court may not refer to the juvenile court a child who has turned age 17 by the time that the municipal court conducts the contempt hearing. Art. 45A.461(g), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.461(c)(2)(A), C.C.P.
Court may not find a child in contempt of another court's order.</p> <p>Art. 45A.461(c)(2)(B), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 45A.259, C.C.P.</p> |
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CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Magistrate’s Warning for a Written or Oral Juvenile Confession of a Child, Section 51.095, F.C.

26. Written Confession

Checklist 13-26	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Identify yourself to the child.</p>	<p>“My name is _____. I am the Judge of _____ Court.”</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Determine if the child sufficiently understands the English language or possesses any impairments.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. If necessary, swear a person to act as an interpreter.</p>	<p>Art. 38.30, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. If the child is deaf, obtain the services of an interpreter as provided by Article 38.31, C.C.P., to interpret the warning.</p>	<p>Art. 15.17(c), C.C.P. See Checklist 12-5.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. All activities must take place in a setting approved by the juvenile board. This means the juvenile processing office, or the office or official designated by the juvenile court as required in Section 52.02, F.C.</p>	<p>A “juvenile processing office” should not be confused with a “place of nonsecure custody” described in Article 45A.453, C.C.P.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Be sure that you know the policy set out by your local juvenile court or juvenile board as to where a child might be taken for receipt of a statement.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Advise the child of the following warning:</p>	<p>Sec. 51.095(a)(1)(A), F.C.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. “You may remain silent and not make any statement at all and that any statement that you make may be used in evidence against you.”</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. “You have the right to have an attorney present to advise you either prior to any questioning or during the questioning.”</p>	

- c. “If you are unable to employ an attorney, you have the right to have an attorney appointed to counsel with you before or during any interviews with peace officers or attorneys representing the State.”

- d. “You have the right to terminate the interview at any time.”

- 7. Advise the child as follows:
 - a. “You will not be penalized for not making a statement.”

 - b. “Any prior oral statements made by you are not admissible except if the statement contains assertions of facts or circumstances that are found to be true, and which tends to establish your guilt.”

- 8. Sign the written warning noting the date and time.

- 9. After the statement is reduced to writing, a magistrate must again give a proper warning to the child before the written statement is signed by the juvenile in the presence of the magistrate.

- 10. No law enforcement official or prosecuting attorney can be present except that a magistrate may require a bailiff or law enforcement officer to be present to ensure the safety of the magistrate and other court personnel. The bailiff or law enforcement officer may not carry a weapon in the presence of the child.

- 11. The magistrate must certify in writing that he or she is convinced that the child understands the nature and contents of the statement and signs it voluntarily.

When an attorney is requested, a police officer must stop asking the accused questions until he is provided with an attorney. However, a request for counsel must be sufficiently clear that a reasonable police officer would understand the statement to be a request for an attorney. *Davis v. U.S.*, 512 U.S. 452, 459 (1994).

CHAPTER 13 JUVENILE AND MINOR PROCEEDINGS

Magistrate’s Warning for a Written or Oral Juvenile Confession of a Child, Section 51.095, Family Code

27. Oral Confession

Checklist 13-27	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Comply with items 1–7 in Checklist 13-26.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. The warning must be part of the recording.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. At the time of the warning, the magistrate may require that the officer return the child and the recording to the magistrate at the conclusion of questioning.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. The magistrate may then view the recording with the child or have the child view the recording in order to determine whether the child’s statement was given voluntarily.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The magistrate’s determination of voluntariness must be reduced to writing and signed and dated by the magistrate.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. If a magistrate invokes Section 51.095(f), F.C., a child’s confession is not admissible unless the magistrate determines that statement was given voluntarily.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. The child must knowingly and voluntarily waive each right stated in the warning.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. The recording device must be capable of making an accurate recording.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. The operator of the device must be competent to use the device.</p>	<p>Sec. 51.095(a)(5)(A), F.C.</p> <p>Sec. 51.095(f), F.C.</p> <p>Note: While subsection (f) is discretionary, magistrates should be prepared to explain why they did or did not invoke the option.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Magistrate’s Determination of Voluntariness – Recorded Statement of Child.</i></p> <p>See <i>State v. Torres</i>, 666 S.W.3d 735 (Tex. Crim. App. 2023).</p>

CHAPTER 14 CONTEMPT OF COURT

1. General Contempt

The contempt power of the court should be used sparingly. A person accused of contempt has the rights of a criminal defendant, regardless of whether the contempt is considered civil or criminal (discussed below). A more thorough discussion of contempt of court is contained in Chapter 6 of *Municipal Courts and the Texas Judicial System*. **Juvenile contempt under Article 45A.461, C.C.P., is covered in Checklist 13-25.**

Checklist 14-1	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>“Contemnor” is a person held in contempt.</p> <p>“Contempt:” Although there is no statutory definition of contempt, common law defines it as conduct that tends to impede the judicial process by disrespectful or uncooperative behavior in open court or by unexcused failure to comply with clear court orders.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Contempt can be direct or indirect.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. “Direct contempt” is an act which occurs in the judge’s presence and under circumstances that require the judge to act immediately to quell the disruption, violence, disrespect, or physical abuse. “Presence of the court” does not necessarily mean in the immediate presence of the judge or court. Examples of direct contempt may include:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A physical altercation occurring at the door of the courtroom although the court was not able to see the physical act itself;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Disruptive act or event in the courtroom or just outside the courtroom while court is in session;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Refusal to rise on the entrance and exit of the judge;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Tampering with jurors in the jury room;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. An abusive letter delivered to the judge in chambers while trial was in short recess; or</p>	<p><i>Ex parte Norton</i>, 191 S.W.2d 713 (Tex. 1946).</p> <p><i>Ex parte Chambers</i>, 898 S.W.2d 257 (Tex. 1995).</p> <p><i>Ex parte Knable</i>, 818 S.W.2d 811 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991).</p> <p><i>Ex parte Daniels</i>, 722 S.W.2d 707 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987).</p> <p><i>Ex parte Aldridge</i>, 334 S.W.2d 161 (Tex. Crim. App. 1959).</p> <p><i>Ex parte Krupps</i>, 712 S.W.2d 144 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986).</p>

- f. Refusal to answer questions in court.

Note that an affront to a judge’s personal sensibilities should not be confused with obstruction to the administration of justice. Offensive comments, even though spoken in open court, are not contemptuous unless they are disruptive or boisterous.

- 3. In many instances, direct contempt is punished summarily by the offended court at the time the act occurs. However, there is no requirement that direct contempt be punished immediately; a judge has discretion to set the matter for hearing at a later time.

The trial court’s authority to punish contemptuous conduct summarily requires an act which occurs in the judge’s presence and under circumstances that require the judge to act immediately to maintain order. If the contemnor can be afforded due process protections without disrupting the orderly trial process, the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment mandates that the contemnor should be afforded these protections.

- 4. “Indirect contempt” is an act that occurs outside the court’s presence. Examples of indirect contempt include:

- a. Failure to comply with a valid court order.

- b. Failure to appear in court.

- c. Attorney being late for trial.

- d. Offensive papers filed in court.

- 5. Indirect contempt requires the contemnor to be notified of the charges, the right to trial or hearing in open court, and the right to counsel.

- 6. Contempt can be civil or criminal:

Ex parte Flourney, 312 S.W.2d 488 (Tex. 1958).

In re Bell, 894 S.W.2d 119 (Tex. 1995).

See *Ex parte Knable*, 818 S.W.2d 811 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991).

Ex parte Gordon, 584 S.W.2d 686 (Tex. 1979).

Ex parte Cooper, 657 S.W.2d 435 (Tex. Crim. App. 1983).

Ex parte Hill, 52 S.W.2d 367 (Tex. 1932).

Ex parte O’Fiel, 246 S.W. 664 (Tex. Crim. App. 1923).

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book* for five different show cause notices in Chapter XIV, Enforcement.

Civil contempt is willfully disobeying a court order or decree.

Criminal contempt is an act that disrupts court proceedings, obstructs justice, is directly against the dignity of the court, or brings the court into disrepute.

- ☐ 7. Statutory authority for contempt proceedings.
 - ☐ a. In municipal courts, contempt is generally punishable by up to three days confinement in jail and/or a fine up to \$100.
 - ☐ b. Some statutes provide for specific contempt fines and do not allow confinement in jail:
 - ☐ (1) Failure by sheriff or officer to execute summons, subpoena, or attachment is punishable for contempt by a fine of \$10 to \$200.
 - ☐ (2) Failure to appear for jury duty is punishable for contempt by a maximum fine of \$100.

- ☐ 8. Special procedures for officers of the court:

- ☐ a. Upon proper motion, release contemnor on personal recognizance bond.
- ☐ b. Refer the case to the presiding judge of the administrative district where alleged contempt occurred.

Ex parte Powell, 883 S.W.2d 775 (Tex. App.—Beaumont 1994).

See Step 15: Sentencing goals.

Sec. 21.002(c), G.C.

Art. 2A.055, C.C.P.

Art. 45A.156(c), C.C.P.
 See *TMCEC 2024 Forms Book: Contempt: Failure to Appear for Jury Service (Complaint and Judgment)*.

Officers of the court include attorneys, peace officers, clerks, bailiffs, court reporters, interpreters, and others on whom the court relies for its operation and enforcement of its orders. Note: the defendant and witnesses are not officers of the court.

Sec. 21.002(d), G.C.

The presiding judge will assign a judge to conduct a contempt hearing. (You may be called as a witness.)

- c. An officer of the court is essentially entitled to a trial de novo on request.
- d. An attorney may be held in direct contempt primarily for misconduct at trial:
 - (1) Expressing indifference to what court may hold or do on account of his or her improper remarks and misconduct.
 - (2) Making continuous frivolous objections amounting to obstruction of the orderly progress of the trial.
- 9. Determine whether the act constitutes direct or indirect contempt.
 - a. Direct contempt:
 - (1) Act occurred in the presence of the court or in its immediate vicinity while the court was in session. Judge is aware of all facts constituting contempt.
 - (2) Immediate action is necessary to quell disruption, violence, disrespect, or to allow trial or proceeding to continue.
 - b. Indirect contempt:
 - (1) Act occurred outside the presence of the court. Judge does not personally witness act.
 - (2) Immediate action is not required to quell disruption, violence, disrespect, or physical abuse.
 - (3) Act requires testimony or production of evidence to establish its existence.

Ex parte Avila, 659 S.W.2d 443 (Tex. Crim. App. 1983).

Ex parte Norton, 191 S.W.2d 713 (Tex. 1946).

Ex parte Crenshaw, 259 S.W.587 (Tex. Crim. App. 1924).

If both of these conditions are met, summary proceedings are authorized and you may go to Step 10: Direct Contempt Procedure below.

Due process requires notice and a hearing. Go to Step 11: Indirect Contempt Procedure below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Most common violation — disobeying a court order: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (A) Court order must be in effect at the time of the act; <input type="checkbox"/> (B) Contemnor must be aware of the order; and <input type="checkbox"/> (C) A written order must be served on the contemnor. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Direct contempt procedure: 	<p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Judgment of Direct Contempt: Adult</i>.</p> <p>Example: Any act that disrupts court proceedings or offends the dignity of the court. Contemnor argues combatively, uses curse words or threatening acts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. If the act is in disobedience to a court order or admonishment, and the contemnor disobeys or fails to cease the undesirable conduct: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Announce that contemnor is in contempt of court. <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Optional: Give contemnor opportunity to explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (A) If explanation is not accepted or if conduct persists, contempt exists. <input type="checkbox"/> (B) If explanation is accepted, no contempt exists. 	<p>Factors to consider: egregious conduct; danger if contemnor not immediately removed.</p> <p>Announce “You are in contempt of court.”</p> <p>Sec. 21.002(c), G.C.</p> <p>See Step 13 below.</p> <p>Skip the rest of this section.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Indirect contempt procedure: 	<p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Indirect Contempt: Adult</i>.</p>

- a. If disobedience to a court order is alleged, notice to contemnor must:
 - (1) Contain the order;
 - (2) Specify when and how contemnor was notified of the order;
 - (3) Specify contemnor’s alleged act in disobedience of the order;
 - (4) Specify when and where the act occurred; and
 - (5) Specify that the act took place after the contemnor became aware of the order.
- b. Otherwise, notice must:
 - (1) Specify contemnor’s alleged contemptuous act; and
 - (2) Specify when and where the act occurred.
- 12. Right to counsel:
 - a. Contemnor has the right to have counsel represent him or her.
 - b. Appoint counsel to represent contemnor if:
 - (1) the contemnor is indigent; and
 - (2) jail time is imposed as part of contempt punishment.
- 13. Contempt Hearing for Direct Contempt:

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book* for contempt show cause notices in Chapter XIV, Enforcement.

Ex parte Goodman, 742 S.W.2d 536 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 1987, no pet.). Appointed counsel is not necessary for contempt punishment limited to fine-only sanctions under Arts.2A.055 and 45A.156(c), C.C.P.

- a. An act of direct contempt occurring in the presence of the court generally requires neither notice nor hearing since there is no factual dispute concerning the contemptuous conduct. Contemnor may be convicted and sentenced for the direct contempt as it occurs.
- b. Summary punishment is permissible on the theory that immediate action is necessary to control courtroom proceedings. If the court postpones conviction and punishment until after the trial, for example, the justification for dispensing with due process requirements disappears.

14. Contempt hearing for indirect contempt:

- a. Since indirect contempt involves an offense not observed by the court, due process requires the contemnor to be given notice and a hearing.
- b. If disobedience to a court order is alleged:
 - (1) Provide evidence contemnor was properly notified of the order;
 - (2) Provide evidence contemnor willfully disobeyed the order after notified of it; and
 - (3) Provide evidence for no satisfactory explanation or defense for disobedience.
- c. If court order not involved:
 - (1) Provide evidence contemnor committed the alleged act; and

Ex parte Krupps, 712 S.W.2d 144 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986).

See Step 15 below.

Ex parte Smith, 467 S.W.2d 411 (Tex. Crim. App. 1971). If a contemnor is summarily held in contempt, the fact that the court waits a day to enter the contempt order does not affect its validity.

Possible defenses include: court lacks personal or subject matter jurisdiction; order of court lacked clarity or specificity or was ambiguous; contemnor not given adequate notice; and order was not based on same acts set forth in charge of contempt.

- (2) Provide evidence for no satisfactory explanation or defense for act.
- d. Ensure contemnor’s constitutional rights are protected:
 - (1) Right to counsel;
 - (2) Right to confront and cross-examine witnesses;
 - (3) Privilege against self-incrimination;
 - (4) Protection against double jeopardy; and
 - (5) Right to public trial.

There is no right to trial by jury in most contempt hearings. Texas courts generally have the right to adjudicate contempt proceedings without a jury.
Ex parte Werblud, 536 S.W.2d 542 (Tex. 1976).

Contemnor is entitled to a jury trial if the contempt is classified as a serious rather than petty offense. One factor in determining whether the offense should be treated as serious or petty is the amount of the fine imposed. The imposition of a minor fine does not elevate the offense from the classification of petty to a serious crime.
Ex parte Werblud, 536 S.W.2d 542 (Tex. 1976).

15. Sentencing goals:

- a. Civil Contempt.

Purpose of civil contempt is remedial and coercive in nature. Judgment of civil contempt exerts the judicial authority of the court to persuade the contemnor to obey some order of the court where such obedience will benefit an opposing litigant.

Ex parte Werblud, 536 S.W.2d 542 (Tex. 1976).

b. Criminal Contempt (Punitive).

The sentence is not conditioned upon some promise of future performance because the contemnor is being punished by fine and imprisonment for some completed act that affronted the dignity and authority of the court.

Ex parte Werblud, 536 S.W.2d 542 (Tex. 1976).

Examples: disruptive conduct that prevents trial from proceeding; attempting to bias jury panel by handing them pamphlets.

16. Order and commitment:

a. Describe the act found to be in contempt.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*: Judgment of Direct Contempt: Adult; and Judgment of Indirect Contempt: Adult.

b. If the act was disobeying a court order:

- (1) Include written order or reduce verbal order to writing.
- (2) Specify when and how contemnor was notified of the order.
- (3) Specify that the act was in disobedience of the order.
- (4) State that the act was committed after contemnor was aware of the order.

c. Remedial sanction:

- (1) Specify exactly what contemnor must do to purge the contempt.
- (2) Order sheriff or chief of police to place person in jail.
- (3) If contemnor purges himself or herself of contempt, order his or her release.

No particular form is required for commitment. Directive that a person be placed in jail and detained may be contained in an authenticated copy of the court's order. *Ex parte Barnett*, 600 S.W.2d 252 (Tex. 1980).

d. Punitive Sanction:

- (1) Specify the punishment.
- (2) If jail time is part of punishment, order sheriff or chief of police to place contemnor in jail for specified time.
- (3) If fine is part of punishment, order contemnor to pay fine by a specific date.
- (4) If there is more than one act of contempt, specify a separate punishment for each act.

Normally, maximum punishment is three days in jail and \$100. Check specific statutes; some authorize fine-only. See Arts. 2A.055 and 45A.156(c), C.C.P.

Punishment should be assessed for each act even if sentences run concurrently. If one punishment is assessed for multiple acts and one of those acts is not contempt, the entire judgment is void.
Ex parte Lee, 704 S.W.2d 15 (Tex. 1986).

CHAPTER 15 BUSINESS ENTITIES

1. Corporations, Associations, and Limited Liability Companies

Whether business entities, including corporations, associations, and limited liability companies, may be prosecuted as defendants in a criminal court depends on the language or intent of the statute alleged to be violated. Sec. 7.22, P.C. The leading case on the subject of criminal liability of corporations is *Vaughan & Sons v. State*, 737 S.W.2d 805 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987). Reversing the court of appeals, the Court of Criminal Appeals in *Vaughan* held that a corporation could commit the crime of criminally negligent homicide. Because of the complexities that accompany the prosecution of a business entity, it is more common to see prosecutors opt to pursue criminal charges against individual employees or association officers. In such cases, Texas law provides individual criminal liability for acts committed on behalf of a business entity. Sec. 7.23, P.C. See *Sabine Consol. Inc. v. State*, 816 S.W.2d 784 (Tex. App.—Austin 1991, no pet.). Such prosecutions may be in addition to any administrative penalty imposed against the corporation. *Ex parte Canady*, 140 S.W.3d 845 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2004, no pet.).

Checklist 15-1	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>“Agent” means a director, officer, employee, or other person authorized to act on behalf of a corporation, an association, a limited liability company, or another business entity.</p> <p>“Association” means a government or governmental subdivision or agency, trust, partnership, or two or more persons having a joint or common economic interest.</p> <p>“High managerial agent” means:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">an officer of a corporation, an association, a limited liability company, or another business entity;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a partner in a partnership; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">an agent of a corporation, association, limited liability company, or other business entity who has duties of such responsibility that his or her conduct may reasonably be assumed to represent the policy of the corporation, association, limited liability company, or other business entity .</p> <p>“Person” includes corporation, organization, government or governmental subdivision or agency, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, and any other legal entity.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Summoning corporation or association:</p>	<p>Art. 17A.01(a)(1), C.C.P.; Sec. 7.22(1), P.C.</p> <p>Art. 17A.01(a)(2), C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17A.01(a)(3), C.C.P.; Sec. 7.22(2), P.C.</p> <p>Sec.311.005(2), G.C.</p> <p>Art. 17A.03, C.C.P.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The court must summon the corporation or association. The summons is in the same form as a <i>capias</i>. A certified copy of the complaint must accompany the summons. <input type="checkbox"/> b. The corporation or association has until 10:00 a.m. on the next Monday after the 20th day after service to answer. <input type="checkbox"/> c. Service must be by a peace officer on the registered agent or a high managerial agent. <input type="checkbox"/> d. No individual may be arrested upon a complaint filed against a corporation or association. | <p>Art. 17A.03 (a)(1-2), C.C.P
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Corporate Summons</i>.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Appearance: <input type="checkbox"/> a. The corporation or association must appear through counsel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Appearance is for the purpose of entering a plea. <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Ten full days must elapse after the day of appearance before the corporation may be tried. <input type="checkbox"/> b. If a corporation or association does not appear in response to a summons, or appears but fails or refuses to plead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) It is deemed to be present in person for all purposes; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The court shall enter a plea of not guilty on its behalf; and | <p>Art. 17A.03 (a)(3), C.C.P.</p> <p>Arts. 17A.04 and 17A.05, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 17A.03(b), C.C.P.</p> <p>Arts. 17A.07(a) and 17A.06, C.C.P</p> <p>.</p> <p>Art. 17A.07(b), C.C.P.</p> |

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (3) In other statutes where strict liability is imposed, unless a legislative purpose not to impose criminal responsibility on corporations, associations, limited liability companies, or other business entities plainly appears. | <p>Sec. 7.22(a)(3), P.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> b. It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of a corporation, an association, a limited liability company, or another business entity under Section 7.22(a)(1) or (a)(2) that the high managerial agent having supervisory responsibility over the subject matter of the offense employed due diligence to prevent its commission. | <p>Sec. 7.24, P.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Punishments upon finding or plea of guilty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Court may sentence the corporation, association, limited liability company, or other business entity to pay a fine in an amount fixed by the court, not to exceed the fine provided by the offense. <input type="checkbox"/> b. If an offense provides no specific penalty, the offense is classified as a Class C misdemeanor and the fine is not to exceed \$2,000. <input type="checkbox"/> c. In addition to any sentence, the court may order a corporation, an association, a limited liability company, or another business entity to give notice of the conviction to any person the court deems appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> d. The clerk must notify the Attorney General's Office. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) If a defendant is a corporation, or a high managerial agent, notice is given when the conviction becomes final and unappealable. <input type="checkbox"/> (2) The notice of conviction of a corporation or high managerial agent shall include: | <p>Art. 17A.09, C.C.P.</p> <p>Sec. 12.51(a), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 12.51(b), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 12.51(d), P.C.</p> <p>Sec. 12.51(e), P.C.</p> <p>Art. 17A.09, C.C.P.</p> |

- (A) The corporation's name, the registered agent(s), and the address of the registered office, or the high managerial agent's name and address, or both.
 - (B) Certified copies of the judgment, sentence, and complaint on which the judgment and sentence were based.
 - e. The benefits of adult probation laws shall not be available to corporations or associations.
 - 5. Enforcement of judgment:
 - a. No individual may be arrested upon judgment or sentence entered against a corporation or association.
 - b. When the sentence against a defendant corporation or association is for fine and costs, it shall be discharged after:
 - (1) The amount has been fully paid;
 - (2) The execution has been fully satisfied; or
 - (3) The judgment has been satisfied in any other manner.
- Art. 17A.08, C.C.P.
This may be construed to include deferred disposition.
- Art. 17A.03(b), C.C.P.
- Sec. 43.01, C.C.P.
- A municipal judge may order the fine and costs collected by execution against the defendant's property in the same manner as in a civil suit. Art. 45A.263, C.C.P.

CHAPTER 16 EVIDENCE

Evidence is something presented at trial to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact. *Black's Law Dictionary*. Not all facts, recollections, records, opinions, or physical items are evidence. Each of the mentioned proofs must meet certain legal standards before they can be called evidence. In determining whether an offered proof is evidence, the court determines if the proof meets the legal threshold of admissibility, but not whether the proof is conclusive, credible, believable, or true. The factual credibility of the evidence is determined by the fact finder after hearing all the evidence. Rule 104, T.R.E.*

The most common form of evidence is oral statements of witnesses based on personal knowledge. In limited circumstance, evidence can be opinions of a witness. Evidence can also be physical items, such as records, photos, recordings, etc. Demonstrative evidence is proof offered as illustrations or explanations of the witness's recollections and perceptions. This includes physical demonstrations by the witness, drawings created during or before testimony, experiments, lists, items that are introduced that look like items observed by the witness, or any other item that demonstrates other properly introduced evidence.

**Please note, the Texas Rules of Evidence (T.R.E.), referenced in this chapter, are available on the [OCA website](#).*

1. When Do the Texas Rules of Evidence Apply?

Checklist 16-1	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. The Rules of Evidence apply in all trials before the court or a jury. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. They apply in all adversary hearings before the court except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Preliminary hearings to determine if competency is an issue; <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Initial appearance before a magistrate for a hearing and setting of bail; <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Applications for search or arrest warrants; <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Pre-trial hearings on the admissibility of confessions or other evidence outside the presence of the jury; and/or <input type="checkbox"/> (5) Proceedings in a direct contempt determination. 	<p>Art. 45A.004, C.C.P.</p> <p>Rule 101(e)(3)(B), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rule 101(e)(3)(C), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rule 101(e)(3)(E), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rules 101(e)(1) and 104(a), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rule 101(e)(3)(F), T.R.E. See Chapter 14 in this book.</p>

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| <p>❑ 2. The rules of privilege always apply. A right of privilege is the right to refuse to testify or answer certain questions. The privileges recognized by the Rules of Evidence, in addition to the constitutional privilege against self incrimination, include the following:</p> | |
| <p>❑ a. The lawyer-client privilege:</p> <p>Attorneys, their staff, clients of an attorney, and representatives of the client, may all refuse to disclose information concerning lawyer-client communications made pursuant to lawful representation.</p> | <p>Rule 503, T.R.E.</p> |
| <p>❑ b. The spousal privilege:</p> | <p>Rule 504, T.R.E.</p> |
| <p>❑ (1) The spouse has a privilege not to take the stand, except in cases of domestic violence.</p> | <p>Art. 38.10, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>❑ (2) The spouse can also refuse to answer questions concerning communications made during the marriage, unless they were made in furtherance of a crime or in cases of domestic violence. The marital communications privilege survives both death and divorce.</p> | |
| <p>❑ c. The communications to a clergy member privilege.</p> | <p>Rule 505, T.R.E.</p> |
| <p>❑ d. There is no physician-patient privilege in criminal proceedings, except a limited privilege for those voluntarily seeking alcohol or drug abuse treatment.</p> | <p>Rule 509, T.R.E.</p> |
| <p>❑ e. The journalist’s qualified testimonial privilege in criminal proceedings.</p> | <p>Art. 38.11, C.C.P.</p> |
| <p>❑ 3. Certain information as well as certain communications are privileged:</p> | |
| <p>❑ a. A person’s vote in any election; and</p> | <p>Rule 506, T.R.E.</p> |

- b. Privileges created by statutes that require certain records be kept, except where the privilege is asserted to conceal fraud.

- 4. Special statutory rules of evidence are used in hearings on sentencing or revocation.

Rules 502 (Required Reports),
507 (Trade Secrets), and 508
(Informers Identity), T.R.E.

Art. 38.37, C.C.P. (Evidence of
Extraneous Offenses or Acts)

CHAPTER 16 EVIDENCE

2. Ways to Prove a Fact

Checklist 16-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Judicial notice:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a. Certain matters may be deemed by the court to be self-evident, well known, or conclusively proven so that the court can simply declare them established by “judicial notice” at the request of a party or on its own initiative.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. The court may take judicial notice when:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (1) A fact is “generally known within the trial court’s territorial jurisdiction;”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (2) A fact “can be accurately and readily determined from sources whose accuracy cannot reasonably be questioned,” or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The fact in issue is the existence or wording of a municipal or county ordinance or other such government regulation, provided the movant present the court with a proper copy of such ordinance.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> c. The court must allow both sides to be heard when taking judicial notice.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. By the testimony of competent witnesses.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. By the introduction of properly predicated and introduced records or other physical evidence.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Arguments by attorneys, parties, witnesses, or any statements by others not sworn and examined are not evidence and not to be considered by the fact finder as evidence.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Plea bargains, plea negotiations, and plea discussions are not admissible.</p>	<p>Rule 201(c)-(d), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rule 201(b), T.R.E.</p> <p>Rule 204, T.R.E.</p> <p>Rules 201(e) and 204, T.R.E.</p> <p>See Rule 601, T.R.E., concerning competency of witnesses.</p> <p>Rule 410, T.R.E.</p>

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3. How Objections are Made and Ruled on by the Court

Checklist 16-3	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Objections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Objections must be made by a party. Objections can never be made by a witness or the court. <input type="checkbox"/> b. The objection is made to the court and not to the opposing party, witness, or jury. <input type="checkbox"/> c. The objection should be respectful and not argumentative. <input type="checkbox"/> d. The objection should be timely made. The objection must be made when the objectionable question or answer is made or given. <input type="checkbox"/> e. Objections must be made every time a matter is raised to preserve the matter for review on appeal unless the court grants a “running objection” on the record, outside the presence of the jury. <input type="checkbox"/> f. Objections that raise matters important to the court’s ruling, but not appropriate for the jury to hear, should be made outside the presence of the jury. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Removal may be made at either party’s request or on the court’s own suggestion. 	<p>A defendant cannot object if represented by counsel.</p> <p>State the legal basis for objection to the proffered question or answer</p> <p>Rule 103(a), T.R.E. Proper objection: “Your Honor, I object to that <u>question/answer</u> because it is <u>hearsay/not relevant/a leading question/ etc.</u>”</p> <p><i>Ethington v. State</i>, 819 S.W.2d 854 (Tex. Crim. App. 1991).</p> <p>Rule 103(c), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. The court has broad discretion in ruling on objections. <input type="checkbox"/> b. The court has no obligation to listen to responses, but should do so if hearing the response would aid the court in making a proper ruling. 	<p>Rule 103, T.R.E.</p> <p>Proper response: “Your Honor, may I respond to the objection?”</p>

- c. Remember that responses are often best made outside of the jury's hearing.
- 3. Offers of proof:
 - a. To properly consider excluded evidence on appeal, the reviewing court must be able to study that evidence.
 - b. The party tendering the excluded evidence is responsible for getting the excluded evidence into the record.
 - c. The offer of proof is always made outside the presence of the jury.
 - d. The party making the offer of proof may be granted substantial latitude in the means of producing said evidence.
 - e. The offer of proof may be made by:
 - (1) Sworn statement;
 - (2) Placement in the record of a physical object not admitted into evidence;
 - (3) Questions to and answers of a witness; or
 - (4) A summary by counsel of the questions and answers expected.
 - f. Offers of proof do not have to be made at the time of the objection and may be made at any time during the trial, so as to facilitate an orderly presentation of the evidence at trial.

Dopico v. State, 752 S.W.2d 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1988, pet. ref'd); and Rule 103(a)(2), T.R.E.

This is obligatory if requested. Rule 103(c), T.R.E.

CHAPTER 16 EVIDENCE

4. Hearsay

Checklist 16-4	Script/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Hearsay is a statement, other than one made by the declarant while testifying at the trial or hearing, offered in evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted.	Rule 801(d), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Hearsay testimony is not admissible unless it falls under an exception to the hearsay rule.	Rule 802, T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Hearsay includes non-verbal conduct if intended as a substitute for verbal expression.	Rule 801(a), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. To be hearsay, the statement must be offered to prove the content of the statement. If the statement is offered to prove that the statement was made and not that the statement is true, it is not hearsay.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Statements defined by the rules as not hearsay:	Rule 801(e), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Prior statements by the witness.	
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Statements by a party offered against that party.	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Statements that are hearsay, but admissible under an exception to the hearsay rule:	
<input type="checkbox"/> a. A present sense impression.	Rule 803(1), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Excited utterances.	Rule 803(2), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. A statement of the declarant’s then existing state of mind, emotion, sensation, or physical condition.	Rule 803(3), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. A statement made for the purpose of medical diagnosis or treatment.	Rule 803(4), T.R.E.
<input type="checkbox"/> e. A prior written record by the witness about matters that he or she once had personal knowledge, but now is unable to recall if such a record was reliably created when the matters were fresh in his or her mind.	Rule 803(5), T.R.E.

<p><input type="checkbox"/> f. Regularly kept business, public, official, medical, commercial, or family records must:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Be kept in the regular course of these other enterprises;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Be recorded by persons with personal knowledge; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Have some indicia of trustworthiness.</p>	<p>Rule 803(6)-(15), and (17), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> g. Authenticated documents over 20 years old.</p>	<p>Rule 803(16), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> h. Learned treatises when used to question experts.</p>	<p>Rule 803(18), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> i. Reputation testimony.</p>	<p>Rule 803(19)-(21), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> j. Judgments of previous conviction against the defendant.</p>	<p>Rule 803(22), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> k. Judgments involving personal, family, or general history or a boundary.</p>	<p>Rule 803(23), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> l. Statements made by the declarant that were against his or her monetary, legal, or social interest.</p>	<p>Rule 803(24), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> m. Statements made exposing the declarant to criminal liability must be corroborated.</p>	<p>Rule 803(24), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. Some hearsay statements are admissible only if the declarant is not available as a witness due to privilege, refusal to testify, lack of memory, death or infirmity, or lack of the witness's attendance at trial due to no fault of the party seeking the testimony. The following are not excluded from evidence if the declarant is unavailable as a witness:</p>	<p>Rule 804, T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Former testimony where both parties were able to fully cross-examine the witness.</p>	<p>Rule 804(b)(1), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Dying declarations of the declarant.</p>	<p>Rule 804(b)(2), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Statement of personal or family history.</p>	<p>Rule 804(b)(3), T.R.E.</p>

- ❑ 8. Hearsay within hearsay is not excluded if an exception is provided for each part of the combined statement.

- ❑ 9. If a hearsay statement comes into evidence, the credibility of the declarant of the hearsay statement is put at issue and may be challenged by other evidence.

Rule 805, T.R.E.

Rule 806, T.R.E.

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5. Objections Concerning Nature of Questions, Answers, or Courtroom Behavior

Checklist 16-5	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Leading questions are questions that suggest the answer desired by the questioner. Leading questions are proper and preferred during cross-examination or during any examination of a hostile witness.</p>	<p>Rule 611(c), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Scope of cross-examination: A witness may be cross-examined on any matter relevant to any issue in the case, including credibility.</p>	<p>Rule 611(b), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Narrative answers - All examinations should be done in a question and answer format. Failure to follow this format causes opposing counsel to be unable to object to particular matters. Testimony that moves from topic to topic without interspersed questions is narrative and improper. However, in some situations, the court may permit narrative responses.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Badgering the witness: A trial should be a formal and civilized proceeding. Undue dramatics, improper aggression, or just plain bad manners may be controlled by the court on a proper objection. The court, if necessary, may act on its own to stop certain conduct.</p>	<p>Rule 611(a), T.R.E.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Sidebar comments and arguing with the witness: During testimony, the attorney’s and/or pro se defendant’s role is to ask questions; they are not sworn and they may not testify. Counsel and pro se defendants should not be allowed to comment on witness’ answers, opposing counsel’s questions, or the court’s rulings in a verbal or non-verbal fashion. Counsel and pro se defendants must convey the ideas they wish to express to the jury through proper questions and during closing arguments. Objections, as noted earlier, should be addressed to the court and not to the witness, opposing counsel, pro se defendant, or jury.</p>	<p>An example of sidebar comments would include: “Oh, I’m sure that is what you saw.” “Please, Your Honor, that is such a stupid question.” “Objection . . . Like he’s ever going to sustain one of my objections.”</p>

- ❑ 6. Non-responsive answers: The court should require witnesses to answer proper, clearly stated questions as asked. During cross-examination, witnesses should be limited to answering questions as asked.
- ❑ 7. The court shall exercise reasonable control over witnesses and the presentation of evidence. The efficient presentation of evidence and actual ascertainment of the truth should be the constant goals of the court.
- ❑ 8. Ethically, the court must require order and decorum in all proceedings. These objections are all based on conduct rather than content and may provide the court with a tool to control courtroom behavior.

To properly make this objection, counsel must ask clear, simple questions that do not call for an explanation.

Rule 611(a), T.R.E.

Canon 3B(3), *Texas Code of Judicial Conduct*

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6. Objections to the Introduction of Physical Evidence

Checklist 16-6	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Predicate: Before introduction of a piece of physical evidence, the party offering the evidence must establish certain preliminary facts:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. The item is authentic; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. If the item is perishable or alterable, the party offering the evidence must show either that the evidence has been in a secure “chain of custody” or that the item has not been altered or changed since it was gathered.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Photographs and recordings must be shown to accurately reflect what the witness initially observed. If such testimony is not available, photographs and recordings are admissible under the rules in Step 1 above.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Demonstrative evidence need only be shown to be helpful to the jury, and be explained by the witness.</p>	<p>For a quick and complete listing of proper predicates, please refer to <i>Predicates</i> published by the Texas District and County Attorneys Association (512.474.2436).</p>

CHAPTER 17 ANIMALS

One area of municipal court civil jurisdiction is cases involving animals under the Health and Safety Code. State law provides procedures for the seizure, hearing, and disposition of dogs that are a danger to persons and animals that are cruelly treated; however, there are many lingering questions and uncertainties when it comes to handling these civil cases.

Many municipalities have enacted ordinances regulating these animal cases. Such local ordinances are contemplated in Sections 822.007 and 822.047 of the Health and Safety Code. Cities should be aware of the state laws as well and consider whether ordinances may be preempted by state law.

These checklists only discuss the procedures under state law contained in Chapters 821 and 822 of the Health and Safety Code.

1. Definitions

Checklist 17-1	Script/Notes
<p>“Animal control authority” is a municipal or county animal control office with authority over the area in which the dog is kept or the county sheriff in an area that does not have an animal control office.</p>	<p>Secs. 822.001(1) and 822.041(1), H.S.C.</p>
<p>In an incorporated municipality with a population of more than 1,000 that is a county seat of a county with a population of 1,380 or more but less than 1,600, the police department is the animal control authority for the municipality in all areas in which a dog is kept and that are subject to the authority of the police department.</p>	<p>Secs. 822.0012 and 822.0411, H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Dangerous dog” is a dog that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Makes an unprovoked attack on a person that causes bodily injury and occurs in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own; or <input type="checkbox"/> b. Commits unprovoked acts in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own and those acts cause a person to reasonably believe that the dog will attack and cause bodily injury to that person. 	<p>Sec. 822.041(2)(A), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 822.041(2)(B), H.S.C.</p>
<p>“Dog” is a domesticated canine.</p>	<p>Sec. 822.041(3), H.S.C.</p>

“Owner” is a person who owns or has custody or control of the dog.

Sec. 822.041(5), H.S.C.

“Secure” means to take steps that a reasonable person would take to ensure a dog remains on the owner’s property, including confining the dog in an enclosure that is capable of preventing the escape or release of the dog.

Sec. 822.001(4), H.S.C.

“Secure enclosure” means a fenced area or structure that is locked; capable of preventing the entry of the general public, including children; capable of preventing the escape or release of a dog; clearly marked as containing a dangerous dog; and in conformance with the requirements for enclosures established by the local animal control authority.

Sec. 822.041(4), H.S.C.

“Serious bodily injury” is an injury characterized by severe bite wounds or severe ripping and tearing of muscle that would cause a reasonably prudent person to seek treatment from a medical professional and would require hospitalization without regard to whether the person actually sought medical treatment.

Sec. 822.001(2), H.S.C.

CHAPTER 17 ANIMALS

A county, justice, or municipal court has original jurisdiction to hear cases involving a dog attack, bite, or mauling that causes serious bodily injury or death to a person. These hearings are governed by Subchapter A, Chapter 822 of the Health and Safety Code.

2. Dogs that Cause Death or Serious Bodily Injury to a Person

Checklist 17-2	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Dog Seizure and Hearings to Determine if a Dog Has Caused Death or Serious Bodily Injury to a Person.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Any person including the county attorney, city attorney, or a peace officer, may file a sworn complaint alleging that a dog attack, bite, or mauling caused the death of or serious bodily injury to a person.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. The complaint must be supported by an affidavit setting forth sufficient facts to establish probable cause to believe that the dog caused death or serious bodily injury by attacking, biting, or mauling a person.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. When a sworn complaint showing probable cause is filed, the court must issue a warrant authorizing the animal control authority to seize the dog and impound it in secure and humane conditions until the court orders the disposition of the dog.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The court must set a time for a hearing to determine whether the dog caused the death of or serious bodily injury to a person by attacking, biting, or mauling the person. The court must give written notice of the time and place of the hearing to the owner of the dog or the person from whom the dog was seized and the person who made the complaint.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. The hearing must be set within 10 days of issuing the warrant.</p>	<p>This type of hearing is used to determine if a dog caused the death of or serious bodily injury to a person by attacking, biting, or mauling the person. Secs. 822.002 and 822.003, H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 822.002(a)(1-2), H.S.C. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Affidavit for Warrant to Seize Dog that Caused Serious Bodily Injury or Death.</i></p> <p>Sec. 822.002(a)-(b), H.S.C. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Seizure Warrant for Dog that Caused Serious Bodily Injury or Death.</i></p> <p>Sec. 822.003(b), H.S.C. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice of Hearing for Dog that Caused Serious Bodily Injury or Death.</i></p> <p>Sec. 822.003(a), H.S.C.</p>

f. Any interested person, including the county or city attorney, may present evidence at the hearing.

g. A “preponderance of evidence” standard may be used to make the required findings.

Preponderance of the evidence is “superior evidentiary weight that, though not sufficient to free the mind wholly from all reasonable doubt, is still sufficient to incline a fair and impartial mind to one side of the issue rather than the other.” *Black’s Law Dictionary*.

h. If the court determines at the hearing that the dog caused the death of a person, the court must order the dog be destroyed.

The dog must be destroyed by a licensed veterinarian; personnel of a recognized animal shelter or humane society who are trained in the humane destruction of animals; or personnel of a governmental agency responsible for animal control who are trained in the humane destruction of animals.

i. If the court determines the dog caused serious bodily injury to the person, the court may order the dog be destroyed.

j. The court may not order the dog to be destroyed if:

Sec. 822.003(c), H.S.C.

It is statutorily unclear whether a “reasonable doubt” or a “preponderance of the evidence” standard should be used in this determination. However, in *Timmons v. Pecorino*, 977 S.W.2d 603, (Tex. Crim. App. 1998), the Court of Criminal Appeals implicitly acknowledged the civil nature of these cases but refused to answer the question for lack of jurisdiction.

Sec. 822.003(d), H.S.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order: Dog Caused Serious Bodily Injury or Death*.

Sec. 822.004, H.S.C.

Sec. 822.003(e), H.S.C.

Sec. 822.003(f)(1-5), H.S.C.

CHAPTER 17 ANIMALS

Subchapter A, Chapter 822 of the Health and Safety Code, provides procedures for what to do if a dog attacks and causes death or serious bodily injury. What if the dog causes injury that does not rise to the level of serious bodily injury? The court cannot order a dog be destroyed if it causes just bodily injury to a person unless the dog has been determined to be a “dangerous dog,” as defined in Section 822.041(2) of the Health and Safety Code.

There are three distinct types of hearings dealing with dangerous dogs that can originate in a county, justice, or municipal court. These proceedings are all governed by Subchapter D, Chapter 822 of the Health and Safety Code. A county or municipality may place additional requirements or restrictions on dangerous dogs if the requirements or restrictions are not breed specific and are more stringent than restrictions provided under Subchapter D. Sec. 822.047, H.S.C. It is a Class C misdemeanor for a person who owns or has custody or control of a dangerous dog to fail to comply with Section 822.042 or Section 822.0422(b) or an applicable municipal ordinance relating to dangerous dogs, and a subsequent offense is a Class B misdemeanor. Sec. 822.045, H.S.C.

Note that none of these procedures apply when a dog attacks another animal. There is no municipal court involvement, under state law, when a dog attacks an animal. Sec. 822.013, H.S.C.

3. Dangerous Dogs

Checklist 17-3	Script/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Appeal from Animal Control Authority Determination that Dog is a Dangerous Dog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. If a person reports an incident where a dog either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Makes an unprovoked attack on a person that causes bodily injury and occurs in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own; or <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Commits unprovoked acts in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own and those acts cause a person to reasonably believe that the dog will attack and cause bodily injury to that person. 	<p>Sec. 822.0421(a), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 822.041(2)(A), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 822.041(2)(B), H.S.C.</p>

Then, the animal control authority may investigate the incident and determine if the dog is a “dangerous dog” according to Section 822.041(2), H.S.C. The animal control authority shall notify the owner in writing if the dog is determined to be dangerous.

Sec. 822.0421(a), H.S.C.

- b. Notwithstanding any other law, including a municipal ordinance, an owner may appeal the animal control authority determination to the county, justice, or municipal court of competent jurisdiction within 15 days of being notified of the determination.

Sec. 822.0421(b), H.S.C.
There are no statutory procedures for how the municipal court should handle or dispose of the appeal. Tex. Atty. Gen. Opp. GA-0660 (2008) interprets “court of competent jurisdiction” to refer to territorial jurisdiction and not as requiring the municipal court be a court of record.

- c. To file an appeal, the owner must:
 - (1) File a notice of appeal with the court;
 - (2) Attach a copy of the determination from the animal control authority; and
 - (3) Serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the animal control authority by mailing the notice through the United States Postal Service.

Sec. 822.0421(c), H.S.C.

- d. The owner may appeal the municipal court’s decision to a county court or county court at law in the manner described by Sec.822.0424, H.S.C.

Sec. 822.0421(d), H.S.C.

- e. The court may not order the destruction of a dog during the pendency of an appeal under Sec. 822.0424, H.S.C.

Sec. 822.042(e-1)(2), H.S.C.

- 2. Municipal Court Determination that Dog is a Dangerous Dog:

- a. If city has not adopted an ordinance electing to be governed by Sec. 822.0422, H.S.C., skip to number 3, as this portion does not apply.

Sec. 822.042(a), H.S.C.

- ❑ b. If city has adopted an ordinance electing to be governed by Sec. 822.0422, H.S.C., any person may report to the court an incident where a dog either:
 - ❑ (1) Makes an unprovoked attack on a person that causes bodily injury and occurs in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own; or
 - ❑ (2) Commits unprovoked acts in a place other than an enclosure in which the dog was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the dog from leaving the enclosure on its own and those acts cause a person to reasonably believe that the dog will attack and cause bodily injury to that person.
- ❑ c. The court must notify the owner that the report has been filed and that the owner has five days from the date they receive the notice of the report being filed to deliver the dog to the animal control authority, which shall provide for secure and humane impoundment of the dog until the court orders disposition.
- ❑ d. If the owner fails to deliver the dog, the court must issue a warrant authorizing the animal control authority to seize the dog and impound it in secure and humane conditions until the court orders the disposition of the dog. The owner shall pay any cost incurred in seizing the dog.

Sec. 822.0422(b), H.S.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*:
Complaint: Dangerous Dog
Incident.

Sec. 822.0422(b), H.S.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*:
Notice of Dangerous Dog
Complaint Filed.

Sec. 822.0422(c), H.S.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book*:
Seizure Warrant for Dangerous
Dog.

An owner who fails to deliver the dog as required may be charged with a Class C misdemeanor (Class B for subsequent offenses). Sec. 822.045, H.S.C.

e. The court must set a time for a hearing to determine whether the dog is a dangerous dog. The court must give written notice of the time and place of the hearing to the owner of the dog or the person from whom the dog was seized and the person who made the complaint.

Sec. 822.0423(a)-(b), H.S.C.
See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice of Dangerous Dog Hearing*.

f. The hearing must be set within 10 days of the date the dog is delivered or seized.

Sec. 822.0423(a), H.S.C.

g. Any interested person, including the county or city attorney, may present evidence at the hearing.

Sec. 822.0423(c), H.S.C.

h. A “preponderance of evidence” standard may be used to make the required findings.

Preponderance of the evidence is “superior evidentiary weight that, though not sufficient to free the mind wholly from all reasonable doubt, is still sufficient to incline a fair and impartial mind to one side of the issue rather than the other.” *Black’s Law Dictionary*.

i. At the hearing, the court must determine if the dog is a dangerous dog, according to the definitions in Section 822.041(2), H.S.C.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Dangerous Dog Judgment*.

j. If the court determines the dog is a dangerous dog, the court may order the dog continue to be impounded until the court determines if the owner(s) comply with the requirements in Step 3.

Presumably, if the court declines to find that the dog is a dangerous dog, the court should order the dog be released to the owner or person from whom the dog was seized.

k. The court shall determine the estimated costs to house and care for the impounded dog during the appeal process and shall set the amount of bond for an appeal adequate to cover those estimated costs.

Sec. 822.0423(c-1), H.S.C.

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Not later than 30 days after learning that the person is the owner of a dangerous dog, the owner must:</p> | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Register the dog with the animal control authority for the area in which the dog is kept;</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(a)(1), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Restrain the dog at all times in a secure enclosure or on a leash in the immediate control of the owner;</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(a)(2), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) Show financial responsibility or obtain liability insurance of at least \$100,000 and provide proof of the insurance to the animal control authority; and</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(a)(3), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (4) Comply with any applicable municipal ordinances or county regulations.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(a)(4), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. If the owner does not comply with the requirements, he or she must deliver the dog to the animal control authority not later than 30 days after learning the dog is a dangerous dog.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(b), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. The animal control authority must annually register a dangerous dog if the owner pays an annual \$50 fee and presents proof of:</p> | <p>Sec. 822.043(a)(2), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (1) Current liability insurance or financial responsibility;</p> | <p>Sec. 822.043(a)(1)(A), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (2) Current rabies vaccination; and</p> | <p>Sec. 822.043(a)(1)(B), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> (3) The secure enclosure for the dog.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.043(a)(1)(C), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. The animal control authority must issue to the owner a registration tag for the dangerous dog, which must be put on the dog's collar.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.043(b)(1), H.S.C.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ f. If the owner sells or moves the dog, the owner has 14 days to notify the animal control authority in the new jurisdiction of the dog’s relocation. If the owner presents proof of prior registration and pays a \$25 fee, the new animal control authority must accept the new registration and issue a new tag to be worn on the dog’s collar. | <p>Sec. 822.043(c), H.S.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ g. An owner of a registered dangerous dog must notify the animal control authority of any attacks the dog makes on people. An unprovoked attack by a dangerous dog, outside the dog’s enclosure, causing bodily injury is a Class C misdemeanor offense against the owner. | <p>Secs. 822.043(d) and 822.044, H.S.C. The court may order the dog be destroyed if the owner is convicted. Any order to destroy a dog is stayed for a period of 10 calendar days, during which the dog’s owner may file a notice of appeal. Sec. 822.042(e-1)(1), H.S.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ h. An owner may face criminal liability if the owner knows the dog is a dangerous dog and the dog’s unprovoked attack causes serious bodily injury to (3rd degree felony) or the death of (2nd degree felony) of a person. | <p>Sec. 822.005, H.S.C.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ 5. Non-compliance Hearing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ a. Any person may file an application with the court alleging that the owner of a dangerous dog has failed to comply with the requirements under Sec. 822.042(a), H.S.C. ☐ b. The court must set a hearing and give written notice of the time and place of the hearing to the owner of the dog or the person from whom the dog was seized and the person making the complaint. | <p>Sec. 822.042(c), H.S.C.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>:
Application: Dangerous Dog
Owner Failed to Comply.</p> <p>Sec. 822.0423(a)-(b), H.S.C.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book</i>:
Notice of Hearing: Owner Failed
to Comply.</p> |

- ☐ c. The hearing should be held not later than 10 days after the dog is seized or delivered.

Sec. 822.0423(a), H.S.C.

There is a contradiction in the methodology for dangerous dog hearings set forth in Chapter 822. Specifically, Section 822.042(c) states that if, “**after notice and hearing**” to determine whether an owner of a dangerous dog has failed to comply with the requirements of Section 822.042(a), H.S.C., the court finds a failure to comply, it shall order the seizure of the dog. However, Section 822.0423(a) states that such a compliance hearing must be held not later than 10 days **after** the seizure. This apparent conflict can be resolved if the dog is seized pursuant to another seizure provision (e.g., a quarantine or dog-at-large ordinance). Otherwise, courts may set the hearing for not later than 10 days from the date the owner is notified.

- ☐ d. At the hearing, any interested party, including the city or county attorney, may present evidence.

Sec. 822.0423(c), H.S.C.

- ☐ e. The court shall determine the estimated costs to house and care for the impounded dog during the appeal process and shall set the amount of bond for an appeal adequate to cover those estimated costs.

Sec. 822.0423(c-1), H.S.C.

- ☐ f. If the court finds a lack of compliance, it shall order the seizure of the dog and impound the animal in secure and humane conditions pending the owner’s compliance. The owner has 10 days to comply with the requirements to own a dangerous dog. If the owner does not comply, on the 11th day after seizure, the court must order the humane destruction of the dog.

Sec. 822.042(e), H.S.C.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Dangerous Dog Judgment: Owner Failed to Comply; and Seizure Warrant for Dangerous Dog: Owner Failed to Comply.*

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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> g. If the court orders the seizure of the dog, but is unable to locate the owner, the court may order the humane destruction of the dog 15 days after the date of impoundment.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(f), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> h. Any order to destroy a dog is stayed for a period of 10 calendar days from the date the order is issued, during which period the dog's owner may file a notice of appeal.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(e-1)(1), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> i. The owner is liable for all fees or costs assessed for the seizure, acceptance, impoundment, or destruction of the dog.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.042(d), H.S.C.
A city can enter into a contract for the collection of unpaid fines, fees, or court costs in civil cases. Sec. 140.009, L.G.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> j. The owner or person filing the action may appeal the municipal court's determination in the manner as described by Sec. 822.0424, H.S.C.</p> | <p>Sec. 822.0423(d), H.S.C.</p> |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> k. An owner who fails to comply with the requirements of Sec. 822.042, H.S.C., can also be charged with a Class C misdemeanor.</p> | <p>A person may be charged with a Class C misdemeanor for failing to comply with requirements under Sec. 822.042, Sec. 822.0422(b), H.S.C., or other applicable regulations under an ordinance, and subsequent offenses are Class B misdemeanors. Sec. 822.045, H.S.C.</p> |

CHAPTER 17 ANIMALS

There are two avenues for protecting animals from cruel treatment under state law: criminal prosecution of the actor under the Penal Code, and the civil remedy to remove animals from the owners under Chapter 821 of the Health and Safety Code. These cases can be presented originally to a judge of a justice or municipal court or to a magistrate for a hearing in the justice or municipal court.

4. Disposition of Cruelly Treated Animals

Checklist 17-4	Script/Notes
<p>Definitions:</p> <p>“Cruelly treated” includes tortured, seriously overworked, unreasonably abandoned, unreasonably deprived of necessary food, care, or shelter, cruelly confined, or caused to fight with another animal, or subject to conduct prohibited by Sec. 21.09, Penal Code.</p> <p>For the purposes of Chapter 821, Subchapter B (“Disposition of Cruelly Treated Animals”), “magistrate” means any officer as defined in Article 2A.151, C.C.P., except that the term does not include justices of the supreme court, judges of the court of criminal appeals, or courts of appeals, judges or associate judges of statutory probate courts, or judges or associate judges of district courts that give preference to family law matters or family district courts unders Subchapter D, Chapter 24, G.C.</p> <p>“Owner” includes a person who owns or has custody or control of an animal.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Seizure of Cruelly Treated Animal(s):</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> a A peace officer or an animal control officer may apply to a municipal court in the municipality or a magistrate within the county in which the animal is located for a warrant to seize the animal.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> b. On a showing of probable cause to believe that the animal has been or is being cruelly treated, the court or magistrate shall issue the warrant and set a time within 10 calendar days for a hearing in the municipal court to determine whether the animal has been or is being cruelly treated.</p>	<p>Sec. 821.021(1), H.S.C. Sec. 21.09, P.C., prohibits bestiality.</p> <p>Sec. 821.0211, H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.021(3), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.022, H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.022(a), H.S.C. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Affidavit for Warrant to Seize Cruelly Treated Animal(s)</i>.</p> <p>Sec. 821.022(b), H.S.C. See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Seizure Warrant for Cruelly Treated Animal(s)</i>.</p>

c. After a court that finds that an animal’s owner has cruelly treated the animal, the court shall order the owner to pay all court costs, including costs of:

(1) the administrative costs of:

(A) investigation;

(B) expert witnesses; and

(C) conducting any public sale ordered by the court; and

(2) the costs incurred by a municipal or county animal shelter or a nonprofit animal welfare organization in:

(A) housing and caring for the animal during its impoundment; and

(B) humanely destroying the animal if destruction is ordered by the court.

Sec. 821.023(e), H.S.C.

d. After a finding that an owner has cruelly treated the animal, the court shall determine the estimated costs likely to be incurred by a municipal or county animal shelter or a nonprofit animal welfare organization to house and care for the impounded animal during the appeal process.

Sec. 821.023(e-1), H.S.C.

- e. When entering the judgment, the court shall set an amount for an appeal bond equal to the sum of the costs ordered under Subsection (e) and the amount of estimated costs under Subsection (e-1).

- f. The court may order that an animal subject to public sale or given to a municipal or county animal shelter or nonprofit animal welfare organization be spayed or neutered at the cost of the receiving party.

- g. The court shall order the animal returned to the owner if the court does not find that the animal's owner has cruelly treated the animal.

- 3. Sale or Disposition of Animal:
 - a. Notice of an auction must be posted on a public bulletin board where other public notices are posted for the county or municipality.
 - b. At the auction, a bid by the former owner of a cruelly treated animal or the owner's representative may not be accepted.
 - c. Proceeds from the sale of the animal shall be applied first to any costs owed by the former owner. The officer conducting the auction shall pay any excess proceeds to the court ordering the auction. The court shall return the excess proceeds to the former owner of the animal.

Sec. 821.023(e-2), H.S.C.
 The court may **not** require a person to provide a bond in an amount greater than or in addition to the amount determined by the court under subsection (e-2). Sec. 821.023(e-3), H.S.C.

The amount of court costs that a court may order and the amount of bond that a court determines are excluded in determining the court's jurisdiction under the Government Code. Sec. 821.023(e-4), H.S.C.

Sec. 821.023(f), H.S.C.

Sec. 821.023(g), H.S.C.

Sec. 821.024, H.S.C.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> d. If the officer is unable to sell the animal at auction, the officer may cause the animal to be humanely destroyed or may give the animal to a municipal or county animal shelter or nonprofit animal welfare organization. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. An owner divested of ownership of an animal under Sec. 821.023, H.S.C., may appeal the order to a county court or county court at law in the county in which the justice or municipal court is located. <input type="checkbox"/> b. As a condition of perfecting an appeal, not later than the 10th calendar day after the date the order is issued, the owner must file a notice of appeal and a cash or surety bond in an amount determined by the court under Sec. 821.023(e-2), H.S.C. <input type="checkbox"/> c. A person filing an appeal is not required to file a motion for new trial to perfect an appeal. <input type="checkbox"/> d. Not later than the fifth calendar day after the date the notice of appeal and bond is filed, the court shall deliver a copy of the clerk’s record to the county court or county court at law to which the appeal is made. <input type="checkbox"/> e. Not later than the 10th calendar day after the date the county court or county court at law receives the record, the court shall consider the matter de novo and dispose of the appeal. A party is entitled to a jury trial on request. <input type="checkbox"/> f. The decision of the county court or county court at law under this section is final and may not be further appealed. <input type="checkbox"/> g. While an appeal under this section is pending, the animal may not be: | <p>Sec. 821.025(a), H.S.C.
Notwithstanding any other law, a county court or county court at law has jurisdiction to hear an appeal filed under this section. Sec. 821.025(g), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(b), H.S.C.
See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Appeal Bond: Cruelly Treated Animal(s) Case</i>.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(f), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(c), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(d), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(f), H.S.C.</p> <p>Sec. 821.025(h), H.S.C.</p> |

- (1) sold or given away as provided by Secs. 821.023 and 821.024, H.S.C.; or
- (2) destroyed, except under circumstances which would require the humane destruction of the animal to prevent undue pain to or suffering of the animal.

CHAPTER 18 EXPUNCTIONS (CHAPTER 55A, C.C.P.)

Chapter 55A of the Code of Criminal Procedure allows an acquitted person and certain others to petition for an expunction of criminal records. Prior to the 85th Legislature, only district courts had jurisdiction to accept these petitions. The ability to order expunctions in municipal courts was considerably more restrained, generally limited to certain juvenile convictions or dismissals. An individual that was acquitted or that had charges dropped for a Class C misdemeanor in a municipal court had to file an expunction petition in district court. In an effort to ease the administrative burden on the persons seeking such an order, H.B. 557 (2017) created concurrent jurisdiction for the expunction of Class C misdemeanors between district court, municipal courts of record, and justice courts. Notably absent from courts given expunction authority under Chapter 55A are non-record municipal courts.

1. Chapter 55A Expunction in Municipal Courts of Record

Checklist 18-1	Script/Notes
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. A municipal court of record may expunge all records and files relating to the arrest (in the county) of a person under the procedure established under Article 55A.201 if:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. A person charged with a fine-only misdemeanor is acquitted by the trial court;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. A person convicted of a fine-only misdemeanor is subsequently pardoned, including on the basis of actual innocence;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. A person charged with a fine-only misdemeanor is released, has no final conviction, and a charge is no longer pending;</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. A person is tried and convicted of a fine-only misdemeanor and acquitted by the Court of Criminal Appeals, court of appeals, or if before trial expunction is recommended by the prosecutor; or</p>	<p>Art. 55A.201, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 55A.002, C.C.P. If the offense arose out of a criminal episode, and the person was convicted of or may still be prosecuted for another offense during the criminal episode, then the person is not eligible for expunction. Art. 55A.151, C.C.P.</p> <p>See <i>TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Admonishment for Expunction on Acquittal</i>.</p> <p>Art. 55A.003, 55A.004, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 55A.051, C.C.P.</p> <p>Art. 55A.101, C.C.P.</p>

- e. A person complies with an order of deferred disposition, and the complaint is dismissed.
- 2. After acquittal, the trial court should notify the acquitted of expunction.
 - a. Expunction can be requested in the trial court by either the defendant or the prosecutor.
 - (1) If the defendant requests expunction, the prosecutor must be notified.
 - (2) If the prosecutor requests expunction, the acquitted person must consent.
 - b. If the defendant has an attorney, the attorney must prepare the expunction order. For pro se defendants, the prosecutor shall prepare the order for the court's signature.
 - c. Upon request of the acquitted person, an order of expunction shall be entered not later than the 30th day after the date of acquittal.
- 3. A person requesting expunction under Chapter 55A for a fine-only misdemeanor (other than after acquittal in the trial court) must file a petition for expunction in a district court, a justice court, or a municipal court of record in the county in which:
 - a. The petitioner was arrested; or
 - b. The offense was alleged to have occurred.

Art. 45A.305(d), C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Admonishment for Expunction on Acquittal and Order of Expunction*. Art. 55A.201(b), C.C.P.

While no petition is required, the requesting party must provide all of the information required of a petition to the court. See the list in Step 4 below.

Art. 55A.252, C.C.P.

Additionally, an ex parte petition may also be filed by a Department of Public Safety representative. Art. 55A.257, C.C.P.

4. In addition to any other fees required by other law, a petitioner seeking expunction Chapter 55A shall pay a fee of \$100 for filing a petition for expunction to defray the cost of notifying state agencies of orders of expunction..

Art. 102.0061(b), C.C.P.

a. The fee shall be waived if the petitioner seeks expunction of a criminal record that relates to an arrest for an offense of which the person was acquitted, other than an acquittal for an offense described by Article 55A.151, and the petition for the expunction is filed not later than the 30th day after the date of the acquittal.

Art. 102.0061(c), C.C.P.

b. The fee shall be waived if the petitioner is entitled to expunction under Art. 55A.053(a)(2)(A) or (B) after successful completion of a veterans treatment court program or mental health court program, respectively.

Art. 102.0061(d), C.C.P.

5. A petition must be verified and include the following or an explanation for why one or more of the following is not included:

Art. 55A.253(a), C.C.P.

A verified petition is one that is confirmed or substantiated by oath. *Black's Law Dictionary*.

a. The petitioner's:

(1) Full name;

(2) Sex;

(3) Race;

(4) Date of birth;

(5) Driver's license number;

(6) Social security number; and

(7) Address at the time of arrest;

b. The offense charged against the petitioner;

c. The date the offense charged was alleged to have been committed;

- d. The date of arrest;
- e. The name of the county where the petitioner was arrested and if the arrest occurred in a municipality, the name of the municipality;
- f. The name of the agency that arrested the petitioner;
- g. The case number and court of offense; and together with the applicable physical and e-mail addresses, a list of all:
 - (1) Law enforcement agencies, jails or other detention facilities, magistrates, courts, prosecuting attorneys, correctional facilities, central state depositories of criminal records, and other officials or agencies or other entities of this state or of any political subdivision of this state;
 - (2) Central federal depositories of criminal records that the petitioner has reason to believe have records or files that are subject to expunction; and
 - (3) Private entities that compile and disseminate for compensation criminal history record information that the petitioner has reason to believe have information related to records or files that are subject to expunction.
- h. A petition may not:
 - (1) list any agency more than once; or
 - (2) include multiple contacts or addresses for different divisions of an agency.

Each district clerk is required to compile and maintain a list of these agencies and entities on the clerk's website, including their email addresses. Art 55A.253(c), C.C.P.

Art. 55A.253(b), C.C.P.

- 6. The court shall set a hearing no earlier than the 30th day following the date the petition is filed and shall give a copy of the petition and notice of hearing to each official, agency, or other entity listed in the petition, other than central federal depositories of criminal records, by:

 - a. Certified mail, return receipt requested; or
 - b. Secure electronic mail, electronic transmission, or facsimile transmission.

- 7. If the court does not find that the petitioner is entitled to expunction, enter an order denying expunction.

- 8. If the court finds that the petitioner is entitled to expunction of any records and files that are the subject of the petition, enter an order of expunction.

- 9. When the order of expunction is final, the clerk of the court shall send a copy of the order to the Crime Records Service of the Department of Public Safety, Office of Court Administration, and to each official or agency or other governmental entity of this state or of any political subdivision of this state listed in the order. The copy of the order must be sent by secure electronic mail, electronic transmission, or facsimile transmission or otherwise by certified mail, return receipt requested. In sending the order to a governmental entity listed in the order, the clerk may elect to substitute hand delivery for certified mail under this subsection, but the clerk must receive a receipt for that hand-delivered order.

Art. 55A.254, C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Notice of Expunction Hearing.*

The clerk is not required to send the petition or notice of hearing to the Office of Court Administration. Art. 55A.254(a-1), C.C.P.

State or local agencies with an email address identified in the petition must accept electronic copies of the petition or hearing notice sent by the court clerk. The clerk may not charge a fee to send documents electronically. If an agency cannot receive electronic delivery, the clerk must charge a \$25 fee for each such agency listed in the petition. Art. 55A.254(d)-(f), C.C.P.

See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order Denying Expunction.*

Art. 55A.255, C.C.P. See *TMCEC 2026 Forms Book: Order of Expunction.*

Art. 55A.351, C.C.P.
 State or local agencies with an email address identified in the petition must accept electronic copies of an expunction order sent by the court clerk. The clerk may not charge a fee to send the order electronically. If an agency cannot receive electronic delivery, the clerk must charge a \$25 fee for each such agency listed in the petition. Art. 55A.351(b-1)-(b-3), C.C.P.

- ❑ 10. If an order of expunction is issued under this article, the court records concerning expunction proceedings are not open for inspection by anyone except the person who is the subject of the order unless the order permits retention of a record. The clerk of the court issuing the order shall obliterate all public references to the proceeding and maintain the files or other records in an area not open to inspection.

- ❑ 11. Except in the case of a person who is the subject of an expunction order on the basis of an acquittal, the clerk of the court shall destroy all the files or other records maintained, other than the expunction order itself, on the first anniversary of the date the order was issued, unless the records or files were released.

Art. 55A.356, C.C.P.

Art. 55A.356(c), C.C.P.
The clerk must keep the expunction order confidential and may provide a copy only to the person named in the order, after verifying their identity, unless the court orders otherwise. Art. 55A.356(c-1), C.C.P.

The court must keep federal prohibited person information even if the case is expunged. This information is confidential and may be shared only with the Department of Public Safety or the FBI for record audits or to verify a person's inclusion in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Art. 55A.3025, C.C.P.



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