



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

Public Affairs Division
Julia Benitez Sullivan
Manager

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
public.info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 28, 2019

DA hires advocates for crime victims in felony court hearings

EDINBURG – Victims of crime will have someone in their corner during felony trials thanks to Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney Ricardo Rodriguez Jr. and a \$540,000 Victims of Crime Act grant.

Rodriguez is in the process of hiring 12 Court Advocates with the grant funds, awarded from the Office of Governor Greg Abbott's Criminal Justice Division. There will be one Court Advocate assigned to each felony District Court to ensure that victims are afforded their victims' rights.

"Having a Court Advocate assigned to each of the 12 District Courts that handle felony cases has been a goal of mine since starting the Victims Unit in 2015 because, for crime victims, the process can be a scary and confusing time and they sometimes may not know where to go for help, resources, and information," Rodriguez said. "The advocates will provide emotional support, advocacy, and assistance to victims coming to court."

Advocates will have direct contact with victims and will make weekly calls to notify them of court proceedings and trial dates. They will also assist victims with Victim Impact Statements, Restitution, Allocutions, help victims register with the Victim Information Notification Everyday (VINE), and will refer them for post-sentence victim services with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Hidalgo County Community Supervision Department.

Rodriguez said that the Victims Unit has been able to grow its services and staff due to county and state funding.

"We are very grateful to the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court, Hidalgo County Judge's Office, the Office of the Governor of Texas-Criminal Justice Division, and the Texas Attorney General Crime Victims Division for the continued funding," Rodriguez said.

According to Victims Unit Director Rosie Martinez, staff has assisted 19,213 victims and has received more than \$3 million in grant and matching funds since its establishment in April 2015. Nearly all of the grants have been used to hire staff to assist and support victims, Martinez said.

"Thanks to the recent grant, the Victims Unit will now have 21 employees to carry on its mission to ensure that victims are treated with dignity, respect and compassion," Martinez said.

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus



Contact: Julia Benitez Sullivan
Phone: 956.292.7026
Email: julia.sullivan@co.hidalgo.tx.us

###

Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

Public Affairs Division
Julia Benitez Sullivan
Manager

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
public.info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus