



Laura Hinojosa

Hidalgo County District Clerk

Planning ahead...

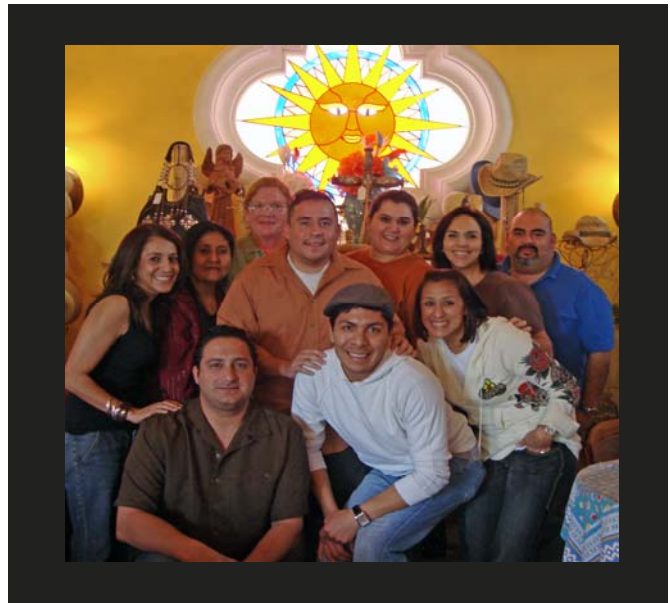
2008 brought its share of exciting changes to the district clerk office. We have welcomed the addition of a full-time internal auditor and accountant, which assist in our efforts in achieving checks and balances. Last year also brought us the formation of the 449th District Court and newly elected officials. Our most sincere congratulations to all and we look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to serve our community.

As we welcome new faces, we also celebrate the vitality of our clerks, the true engine of this organization. Through daily activity, professional and technical development, and ongoing internal assessments, our office has made great strides towards continued progress.

Our administration's accomplishments, however, could not have been possible without the support of our County Judge and County Commission, which is vital to the success of our office. They, in addition to our administrative county departments, fuel our efforts. We are grateful for your time, work and patience.

In our never ending quest for improvement, the district clerk office concluded 2008 with a strategic planning retreat on South Padre Is-

“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” ~ John F. Kennedy



District clerk administrators and IT staff attend strategic planning retreat on South Padre Island, Dec. 14, 2008.

land, Texas. Through the assistance of Nancy Baird, Training Strategist, we were able to determine where our office wants to go over the next two years and how we're going to get there. The ability to solidify a strategic plan as a newly elected official proved to be challenging due to our inability to assess, at that time, the current state of the office. Over the past couple years, however, we have made an organization-wide effort to identify and collect data that will help facilitate the necessary progress. We acknowledge that the success of our plan will depend largely on the nature of our leadership and our staff's commitment to follow through. Nonetheless, we are excited and welcome these future endeavors with integrity and resolve. Here's to another great year...the best is yet to come!

Laura



Friendly Reminder...

Our office has recently experienced a number of returned Certificates of Service. This is due in large part to the incorrect address documented on the certificate. May this serve as a reminder, when submitting Certificates of Service, please verify physical addresses and refrain from utilizing a post office box. We appreciate your efforts as we try to facilitate this service as efficiently as possible.



Rate Our Service

In October 2008 the district clerk office implemented *Public Feedback Forms* to assess services being rendered. The forms can be an excellent tool for the public to communicate suggestions or concerns on critical services. The form can also serve as a great way to identify exemplary customer service and compliment specific individuals. We are currently in the process of implementing an employee recognition program.

A portion of it will be designed to recognize employees who are identified in our *Public Feedback Forms* as providing "Excellent" service. We are confident through these efforts we can continue to evolve while honoring our dedicated employees who help contribute to the organization's progress and success. We hope next time you visit the district clerk office you'll take a minute to fill out one of our *Public Feedback Forms* with your honest evaluation. Once completed, the forms can be deposited into any one of our six customer feedback boxes along our window counters. Thank you in advance for taking the time!



Passports

In anticipation of district clerk office passport services, designated staff attended a Passport Acceptance Facility Training on September 23rd in Brownsville, Texas. The training consisted of a review of execution procedures and the processing and assembly of passport applications. In addition, staff was trained on identifying fraudulent documents, fee assessment, and maintaining quality control. Agents are scheduled to attend another training course in early 2009. Passport services are scheduled to commence on February 2, 2009. Although appointments are preferred, walk-ins are welcome. Appointments can be made in person or by calling 956.318.2200, ext. 6270.

Passport Book

\$75 – 16 yrs & older

\$60— under age 16

Passport Card

\$20—16yrs & older

\$10—under age 16

Execution fee

\$25

Photo Fee

\$15

Expedite Fee

\$60

You must apply in person if:

- You are applying for your **first** U.S. passport **or**
- You are **under age 16** **or**
- Your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were **under age 16** **or**
- Your previous U.S. passport was **lost, stolen, or damaged** **or**
- Your previous U.S. passport was issued **more than 15 years ago** **or**
- Your name has changed since your U.S. passport was issued and you are **unable to legally document your name change.**

Requirements:

- Passport Application—Form DS-11
- Proof of Citizenship
- Acceptable Identification
- Applicable Fees
- Two passport photos

Visit www.co.hidalgo.tx.us or www.travel.state.gov for further details.

Officials Host Association Conference

The Hidalgo County and District Clerk offices, in collaboration with Cameron County & District Clerks hosted the **County & District Clerk Association of Texas, Region VIII Fall Conference** on South Padre Island, October 2-3, 2008. The purpose of the County and District Clerk Association is to promote professional standards, to provide the means for the education of its members regarding the statutory and constitutional duties of the offices of the county clerk and the district clerk, and to participate in the legislative, judicial and executive processes of state government beneficial in the performance of the members' duties.



Among those in attendance were elected officials from the 32 counties represented in Region VIII, in addition to representatives from the Texas State Library, Office of Court Administration, Texas Secretary of State and Texas Attorney General's Office.

"This is a great opportunity for my colleagues and I to learn more about our responsibilities to our community as elected officials. It's exciting to participate in these meetings because I get to take what I've learned back to my office and apply it to benefit my staff and the people we serve. We really learn a lot from each other," said Laura Hinojosa.

Professionalism in the Workplace



Staff volunteers participate in office fashion show as part of professionalism workshop.

The district clerk office partnered with Target on November 21st to promote professionalism in the workplace as part of the office training series. The workshops, held monthly and proposed through employee feedback, consist of professional and technical development for staff throughout the year.

"Part of our mission is to provide educational opportunities for all employees. This specific workshop was phase II of Professionalism in the Workplace, which focused more on dress rather than decorum. We hope it will help to foster a more professional image and culture in the office," said Hinojosa. "We're extremely excited to partner with Target to convey our vision for classic taste at an affordable price, an attribute crucial to families everywhere during a harsh economic situation."

Through their partnership, the district clerk office was able to borrow store apparel at no cost. During the session, staff volunteers modeled select ensembles for their peers during the "fashion show" portion. A power point presentation played in the background highlighting the do's and don'ts of office attire. Before the presentation concluded, a handout titled "Professional Dress Checklist," was distributed outlining what is deemed appropriate in suits, shirts/blouses, ties, belts, shoes, jewelry, makeup, perfume/cologne, undergarments, hosiery and personal grooming.

"Having this workshop was a really good experience for me and my coworkers," said Roxanne De La Cruz, Deputy Clerk. "I am sure that our office will benefit from this and it will help us to be more cautious about the image we portray as public servants."

Staff Performance Outcomes

The ability of the district clerk office to achieve its mission depends upon its employees. The skills and abilities they use to carry out their responsibilities will determine the success of the office. We are confident through a sound employee evaluation our staff will:

- understand how their individual work contributes to our office
- help us to emphasize significant job assignments and related performance standards and
- encourage an effective development plan


The following areas are assessed during the performance appraisal process for all staff:

- Primary Job Assignments
- Team work
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Leadership
- Decision Making
- Communication
- Planning, Organizing & Flexibility

These areas are assessed using a four scale rating system which consists of the following:

1. Exceeds Requirements
2. Meets Requirements
3. Does Not Meet Requirements
4. Not Applicable

This year's performance outcomes proved to be significantly different from last year's. This is due in large part to the district clerk's office increased performance standards. This is also due to the amended rating scale which no longer includes a "Superior Rating." Our office will continue to assess our performance appraisal process to optimize effectiveness. We acknowledge there is room for improvement at all levels of the organization. Through these efforts, however, we are confident we can better foster effective bilateral communication to provide our staff with the necessary resources and guidance to better serve the public.


Laura Hinojosa
 Hidalgo County District Clerk

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Name: _____ Title: _____
 Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

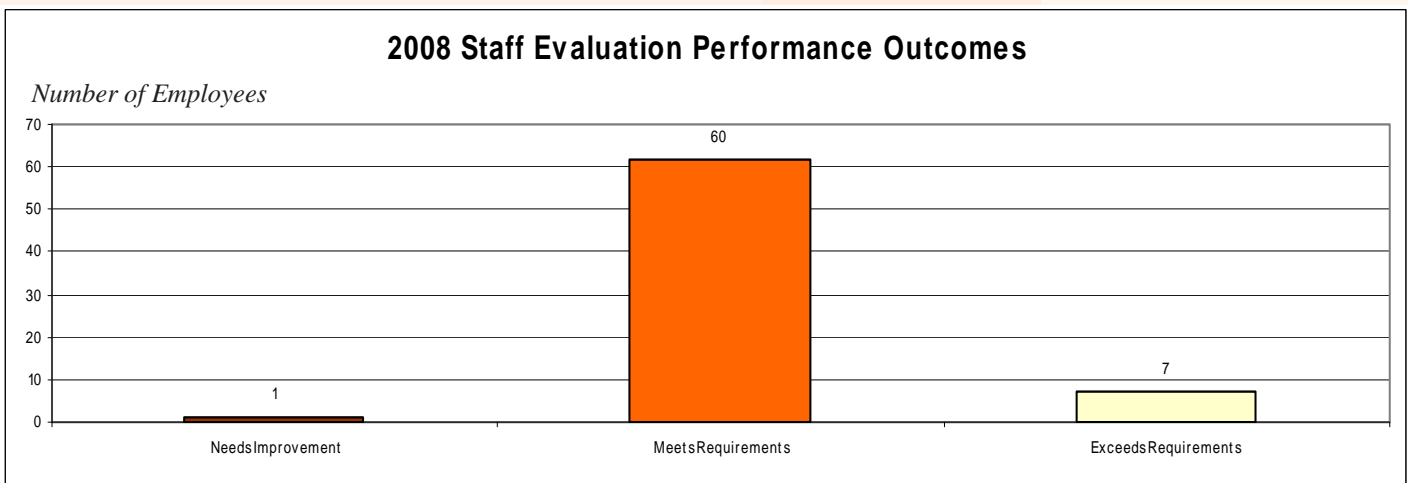
INSTRUCTIONS: Please review the Employee Evaluation Guide for detailed instructions prior to commencing the appraisal. Brief instructions are also provided in most sections indicating when supervisors should document specific information or obtain feedback from the employee. Supervisors will rate employee performance in applicable sections by utilizing the scale rating system: 1) Superior Performance, 2) Exceeds Requirements, 3) Meets Requirements, 4) Does Not Meet Requirements, or 5) Not Applicable (please note that the scale rating system in section II allows for the individual assessment of each primary job assignment) and should reflect the collective assessment rating in sec. IV under "Results Focus". A "comments" section has been provided to allow the supervisor to make notes after every performance area. In section VI, the supervisor must give an overall rating consistent with the provided rating formula. Supervisors are required to document any comments made by the employee in regards to their performance assessment and must confirm the review of their evaluation by signing this document.

I. PRIMARY JOB PURPOSE
 Performs a variety of complex support tasks to include: processing a variety of documents; drafting and maintaining routine correspondence; resolving questions and problems; providing information and customer service to the public; researching files and records; and assisting in the training of support staff. Works within a well-defined framework of policies and procedures, under general supervision, performing other duties as required.

II. PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENTS

Job Assignments	Rating				
	Meets Requirements	Exceeds Requirements	Does Not Meet Requirements	Not Applicable	Superior
• Research, prepare and process a variety of documents filed with the court which may include subpoenas, citations, subpoenas, writs, order of sale or general correspondence; reviews the accuracy and completeness on a daily basis.					
• Research civil, criminal, family, adoption, juvenile, protective orders and child welfare and maintain in proper sequence volumes (at least once a week); open court cases if needed on a daily basis.					
• Process court documents in accordance with court procedures and legal requirements; maintain official records of court proceedings; prepare monthly reports in a timely manner.					
• Obtain and maintain filing systems; make copies, type forms and perform other clerical work as needed on a daily basis.					
• Help perform civil, criminal, family, adoption, juvenile, protective orders and child welfare searches and issue service of process on said orders with persons; should prepare all jury lists in a timely manner and may process and maintain docket.					
• Review, sort, assemble and organize materials; review and deliver daily mail and documents to appropriate parties on a daily basis.					
• Answer phones and provide service to the general public and the courts in a courteous and professional manner.					
• Has the ability to work well with others and assist in the training of support staff.					
• Regular and punctual attendance.					
• Performs related duties as required.					

CALCULATE RATING:
 [Overall rating for this section is assessed in sec. IV under "Results Focus: Achieves key job assignments and performance standards"]



Contact Information

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Office Hours

Monday—Friday

7:30am—5:30pm

We encourage your honest assessment of our services as we continue to evolve and improve through your valuable input. Our team of outstanding and hardworking individuals is ready to assist you as it is our priority to provide exemplary service while preserving and maintaining the records of the Hidalgo County Judicial System. Please contact our office if you have any questions or require additional information.

You can also visit www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk



Hidalgo County District Clerk Office Presents Check to the Make-A-Wish Foundation

Edinburg, Texas – The Hidalgo County District Clerk Office presented a check totaling \$2,500.00 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation as part of their *Blues for Bucks* Workplace Fundraising Campaign to benefit local charitable organizations. The program allows department staff to wear jeans every Friday in exchange for a \$5 donation.

“I am extremely proud of our staff for their support of the Make-A-Wish Foundation and their willingness to give back to their community. They are extremely elated to see their efforts going towards a cause that helps grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions,” said Hinojosa.

The district clerk office kicked off their charitable efforts in 2008 as part of the American Heart Association’s *Go Red for Women* campaign. The office has since then expanded their efforts through the creation of a “charitable organizations list” of which staff randomly selects a recipient every six months.

“Right now in our Rio Grande Valley, there are dozens of children who are battling life-threatening medical conditions. They have had to put their childhoods on hold and deal daily with more pain and fear than any child should experience. That is why, when we can, we invite them to close their eyes and Make-A-Wish! Then we use a bit of magic, a little hard work, some help from our friends, and a lot of love to make their wish come true. The staff at our district clerk’s office has been an exemplary example of true compassion for our community in their support for these very special children of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Their commendable efforts will help turn a very deserving child’s fondest dream into reality. I admire each of them for going above and beyond their very hectic schedules to reach out, lending a helping hand to our children who really need this love and magic in their lives, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for sharing in the power of a wish,” said Ava Sandlin, Make-A-Wish Foundation Executive Director.

For more information on volunteer opportunities or making a contribution to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, log on to www.riograndevalley.wish.org or contact Ava Sandlin in the McAllen office at (956) 686-9474.

