



Laura Hinojosa

Hidalgo County *District Clerk*

Optimizing Customer Service

The district clerk office has been working to enhance public services by implementing effective tools and responsive practices that will enable us to fulfill our commitment as public servants to the County of Hidalgo.

Optimizing customer service was initially identified as one of our priority goals in our strategic plan in 2008. Since then, we have conducted ongoing customer service workshops, implemented customer suggestions forms, and have provided venues such as the district clerk webpage and our new Facebook page to foster public participation and collect feedback regarding our services. Although notable efforts, we have found our current customer service evaluation methods can be inconsistent and fail to accurately measure the critical interactions between district clerk staff and the public.

Hence, the district clerk office has implemented a Public Service Assessment Program to assist in measuring the quality of service provided by our employees. Still in its initial stage, the Public Service Assessment Program is a mystery shopper-like concept where the so called "secret shoppers" pose as everyday customers to request services, ask questions and finally provide reports and feedback about their experience. However, the "secret shoppers" in this case will actually be members of the legal community who conduct day-to-day business at the district clerk office and have been invited to assist in this endeavor. All participants of the Public Service Assessment Program will attend a brief orientation to

review the assessment tools and guidelines to ensure the execution of an effective and impartial evaluation.

District clerk staff attended a workshop which outlined public service expectations and the district clerk office's Customer Service commitments which include:

1. Providing a clean and presentable public service facility and professional staff that allows the public to conduct business in an appropriate manner
2. To effectively communicate to the public our government services and relevant information in a clear and articulate manner
3. Providing quality service and a positive experience for the public through mutual courtesy and respect.

Through our Customer Service Commitments, the Public Service Assessment Program, and our ongoing professional development, the district clerk office will work to ensure it delivers a consistently high level of service, and to continuously develop and make changes to improve customer satisfaction.



Order Adopting Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 78a

Misc. Docket No. 10-9062

Ordered that:

1. Pursuant to section 22.004 of the Texas Government Code, the Supreme Court of Texas promulgates Rule 78a of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure as follows.
2. Rule 78a, with any modifications made after public comments are received, takes effect September 1, 2010. Comments may be submitted to the Supreme Court of Texas in writing on or before August 2, 2010. Comments should be directed to Kennon L. Peterson, Rules Attorney, at PO Box 12248, Austin, Texas 78711, or kennon.peterson@courts.state.tx.us.
3. The Supreme Court of Texas also promulgates the attached civil case information sheet, as approved by the Texas Judicial Council, to be used pursuant to Rule 78a.
4. The Clerk is directed to:
 - A. file a copy of this Order with the Secretary of State;
 - B. cause a copy of this Order to be mailed to each registered member of the State Bar of Texas by publication in the *Texas Bar Journal*;
 - C. send a copy of this Order to each elected member of the Legislature; and
 - D. submit a copy of this Order for publication in the *Texas Register*.

SIGNED this 3rd day of May, 2010

Wallace B. Jefferson, *Chief Justice*

Nathan L. Hecht, *Justice*

Harriet O'Neill, *Justice*

Dale Wainwright, *Justice*

David M. Medina, *Justice*

Paul W. Green, *Justice*

Phil Johnson, *Justice*

Don R. Willett, *Justice*

Eva M. Guzman, *Justice*



Rule 78a. Case Information Sheet

- (a) *Requirement.* A civil case information sheet, in the form promulgated by the Supreme Court of Texas, must accompany the filing of:
- (1) an original petition; and
 - (2) a post-judgment motion for modification or enforcement in a case arising under the Family Code.
- (b) *Signature.* The Civil case information sheet must be signed by the attorney for the party filing the pleading or by the party.
- (c) *Enforcement.* The court and clerk must take appropriate measures to enforce this rule. But the clerk may not reject a pleading because the pleading is not accompanied by a civil case information sheet.
- (d) *Limitation on Use.* The civil case information sheet is for data collection for statistical and administrative purposes and does not affect any substantive right.

Comment: Rule 78a is added to require the submission of a civil case information sheet to collect data for statistical and administrative purposes, see, e.g., Tex. Gov't Code §71.035. A civil case information sheet is not a pleading. Rule 78a is placed with other rules regarding pleadings because civil cover sheets must accompany pleadings.

CIVIL CASE INFORMATION SHEET

CAUSE NUMBER (FOR CLERK USE ONLY): _____ COURT (FOR CLERK USE ONLY): _____

STYLED _____

(e.g., John Smith v. All American Insurance Co; In re Mary Ann Jones; In the Matter of the Estate of George Jackson)

A civil case information sheet must be completed and submitted when an original petition or application is filed to initiate a new civil, family law, probate, or mental health case or when a post-judgment motion for modification or enforcement is filed in a family law case. The information should be the best available at the time of filing. This sheet, approved by the Texas Judicial Council, is intended to collect information that will be used for statistical purposes only. It neither replaces nor supplements the filings or service of pleading or other documents as required by law or rule. The sheet does not constitute a discovery request, response, or supplementation, and it is not admissible at trial.

1. Contact information for person completing case information sheet:		Names of parties in case:		Person or entity completing sheet is:	
Name: _____	Email: _____	Plaintiff(s)/Petitioner(s): _____ _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Attorney for Plaintiff/Petitioner <input type="checkbox"/> Pro Se Plaintiff/Petitioner <input type="checkbox"/> Title IV-D Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Address: _____	Telephone: _____			Additional Parties in Child Support Case:	
City/State/Zip: _____	Fax: _____	Defendant(s)/Respondent(s): _____ _____		Custodial Parent: _____	
Signature: _____	State Bar No: _____			Non-Custodial Parent: _____	
				Presumed Father: _____	
[Attach additional page as necessary to list all parties]					
2. Indicate case type, or identify the most important issue in the case (select only 1):					
<i>Civil</i>			<i>Family Law</i>		
Contract	Injury or Damage	Real Property	Marriage Relationship	Post-judgment Actions (non-Title IV-D)	
<i>Debt/Contract</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer/DTPA <input type="checkbox"/> Debt/Contract <input type="checkbox"/> Fraud/Misrepresentation <input type="checkbox"/> Other Debt/Contract: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Assault/Battery <input type="checkbox"/> Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Defamation <i>Malpractice</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting <input type="checkbox"/> Legal <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Other Professional Liability: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Vehicle Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Premises <i>Product Liability</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos/Silica <input type="checkbox"/> Other Product Liability List Product: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other Injury or Damage: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Eminent Domain/Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> Partition <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet Title <input type="checkbox"/> Trespass to Try Title <input type="checkbox"/> Other Property: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Annulment <input type="checkbox"/> Declare Marriage Void <i>Divorce</i> <input type="checkbox"/> With Children <input type="checkbox"/> No Children	<input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Modification—Custody <input type="checkbox"/> Modification—Other	
<i>Foreclosure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Home Equity—Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Other Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> Franchise <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Landlord/Tenant <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Competition <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Other Contract: _____		Related to Criminal Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Expunction <input type="checkbox"/> Judgment Nisi <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Disclosure <input type="checkbox"/> Seizure/Forfeiture <input type="checkbox"/> Writ of Habeas Corpus—Pre-indictment <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Other Family Law <input type="checkbox"/> Enforce Foreign Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> Habeas Corpus <input type="checkbox"/> Name Change <input type="checkbox"/> Protective Order <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of Disabilities of Minority <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Title IV-D <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement/Modification <input type="checkbox"/> Paternity <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocals (UIFSA) <input type="checkbox"/> Support Order	
Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination <input type="checkbox"/> Retaliation <input type="checkbox"/> Termination <input type="checkbox"/> Workers' Compensation <input type="checkbox"/> Other Employment: _____	Other Civil <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Appeal <input type="checkbox"/> Antitrust/Unfair Competition <input type="checkbox"/> Code Violations <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Property			Parent-Child Relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption/Adoption with Termination <input type="checkbox"/> Child Protection <input type="checkbox"/> Child Support <input type="checkbox"/> Custody or Visitation <input type="checkbox"/> Gestational Parenting <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent Access <input type="checkbox"/> Paternity/Parentage <input type="checkbox"/> Termination of Parental Rights <input type="checkbox"/> Other Parent-Child: _____	
Tax <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Appraisal <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Delinquency <input type="checkbox"/> Other Tax	Probate & Mental Health				
	<i>Probate/Wills/Intestate Administration</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Dependent Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Other Estate Proceedings		<input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship—Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship—Minor <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
3. Indicate procedure or remedy, if applicable (may select more than 1):					
<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal from Municipal or Justice Court <input type="checkbox"/> Arbitration-related <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment <input type="checkbox"/> Bill of Review <input type="checkbox"/> Certiorari <input type="checkbox"/> Class Action		<input type="checkbox"/> Declaratory Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> Garnishment <input type="checkbox"/> Interpleader <input type="checkbox"/> License <input type="checkbox"/> Mandamus <input type="checkbox"/> Post-judgment		<input type="checkbox"/> Prejudgment Remedy <input type="checkbox"/> Protective Order <input type="checkbox"/> Receiver <input type="checkbox"/> Sequestration <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Restraining Order/Injunction <input type="checkbox"/> Turnover	

Passport Fee Increase

The US Department of State has published its new passport fees for the U.S. Passport Book, the U.S. Passport Card, and other passport services, which took effect on **Tuesday, July 13, 2010**. The district clerk office will continue to provide the public with convenient, complete, customer-friendly passport services and encourages the public to contact the office to schedule an appointment at 956.318.2200, ext. 6270.

According to the US Department of State, passport application fees are not only used to cover the costs of producing a U.S. Passport, but also cover the costs of providing emergency services for American citizens overseas in crisis situations, helping Americans who have been the victims of crime while traveling or living abroad, and providing support to the families of American citizens who have died overseas. Passport application fees also enable the US Department of State to keep up with technology and implement fraud prevention initiatives to protect the United States passport, in addition to funding the expansion of passport infrastructure and services.

For more information regarding passports and a full list of adjusted fees, log on to www.travel.state.gov. A notice of the passport fee increase can also be found at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us. The schedule of new fees, effective July 13, 2010, for passport application services is as follows:

U.S. Passport Book for First Time Applicants and Minors			
	Passport Fee Payable to Department of State	Acceptance Fee Payable to Acceptance Facility	Total First-Time Applicant Fee
Adults (age 16 and over)	\$110	\$25	\$135
Minors (under age 16)	\$80	\$25	\$105
U.S. Passport Card for First Time Applicants and Minors			
	Passport Fee Payable to Department of State	Acceptance Fee Payable to Acceptance Facility	Total First-Time Applicant Fee
Adults (age 16 and over)	\$30	\$25	\$55
Minors (under age 16)	\$15	\$25	\$40
Other Service Fees			
Additional Visa Pages		\$82	
File Search Fee		\$150	
Expedite Processing		\$60	

Records Management Task Force

Laura Hinojosa, Hidalgo County District Clerk, was appointed by order dated April 30, 2010, to the *Texas Court Records Preservation Task Force* which was created by the Texas Supreme Court in November 2009. Hinojosa joins a reputable list of 24 other task force members throughout the state which include district clerks, attorneys, judges, state representatives, senators, and members of the State Library and Archives Commission.



According to the Supreme Court of Texas, the task force is charged with:

- collecting data and other information from counties and other state and local agencies on the current status of Texas court records and related preservation activities;
- analyzing the data and other information, including the identification of county and other archives with the most important historical records;
- identifying important needs and areas of concern with regards to preservation and protection of Texas court records, including enforcement and security issues;
- and ultimately developing a plan to address the need to preserve and protect our court records across the State of Texas.

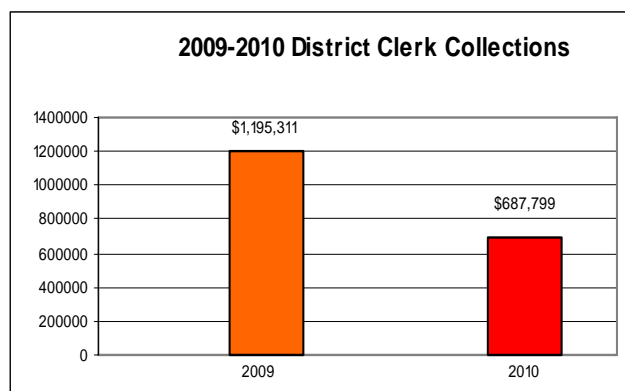
The Task Force will also explore potential funding sources and make a recommendation on whether there is a need to establish a permanent entity to oversee a comprehensive, long term court record preservation effort.

For more information regarding the Texas Court Records Preservation Task Force log on to: www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us.

District Clerk Collections

The district clerk office commends Ana De Luna and Gina Hernandez, District Clerk Collections Specialists, for their time, work and effort in maximizing collections of court costs, fines and fees for the County of Hidalgo. Together they collected \$1,195,311 in 2009. Already half-way into 2010 and they have collected \$687,799.

In 2009, *The Government Collectors Association of Texas (GCAT)* honored Ana with the *Collector of the Year Award*, which is presented to the collector selected as having had the greatest impact on collections efforts for their respective city or county in the State of Texas. The GCAT did not present awards this year during their annual conference, reason unknown.



Hurricane Preparedness

Heavy rain and thunderstorms associated with hurricanes like Alex can pose a potential threat to the 20,000 boxes of court records our office is charged to secure, particularly when it involves flooding. The district clerk office has implemented alternative measures to reduce the risk of water damage through facility inspections, mainly in areas susceptible to developing water leaks, shifting of files to high shelving areas, and waterproofing all storage areas and equipment to protect from potential water damage. Although court records remain undamaged, we continue to work with our local and state officials to assess and secure the necessary preservation resources as governed by the State of Texas. We commend the County Judge's Office, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and all other county departments for their ongoing leadership and collaboration in effectively responding to potential disasters and sustaining, first and foremost, the safety of the residents of Hidalgo County.

Contact Information

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e: districtclerk@co.hidalgo.tx.us

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.

Email your comments to districtclerk@co.hidalgo.tx.us or visit www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk for more info.

Office Hours

Monday—Friday

7:30am—5:30pm



Professional Development

- April 21 – 23, 2010 - **The County & District Clerk Association, Region VIII Conference** assisted clerks in promoting professional standards, providing a 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 organizing for the legislative, judicial and executive processes of state government beneficial in the performance of the clerk's duties.
- April 28 - 30, 2010 - **UTCLE, County & District Clerks Legal Education Program** provided the legal perspective on county and district clerks' issues. Topics included employment law, clerks' ethical issues, records management and much more. The conference featured multiple tracks as well as numerous opportunities to discuss best practices with colleagues.
- May 19 - 21, 2010 - **Tyler Technologies, Courts & Justice Odyssey User Conference** provided new users with useful information and learning opportunities including: interactive forums to connect, share and learn, experience valuable training, hear case studies and meet with Tyler staff, and network with peers to share best practices and ideas.

Blues for Bucks - Check Presentation



The district clerk office presented a check totaling \$3,500 to the Renaissance Cancer Foundation as part of their Blues for Bucks Workplace Fundraising Campaign to benefit local charitable organizations. The Renaissance Cancer Foundation is a private, non-profit organization established to help local cancer patients with the medical needs and emotional challenges related to their illness. For more information on

volunteer opportunities or making a contribution to the Renaissance Cancer Foundation, log on to www.dhr-rgv.com, or contact Marissa Castaneda, Chief Operations Officer at (956) 362-7360. *Boys Scouts Explorer Post 2002* was randomly selected as the next beneficiary of the workplace fundraising campaign.