

The Texas Justice Court Training Center (TJCTC) prides itself as the “education endeavor of the Justices of the Peace & Constable Association.” Ms. Theadora Whalen (pictured right) is the Executive Director of TJCTC, a devoted attorney, and a steward of justice. Her journey with the center began in 2011 as a staff attorney. Her sights to attend law school and her life goal to study trial work never faltered. She paved a solid foundation by relentlessly practicing with the campus trial team for competitions. After earning a Doctor of Jurisprudence at Stetson University College of Law, Ms. Whalen accepted her first position equipped with experience in ethics and knowledge of trial procedures crafted from conscientious consistency.



TJCTC was founded in 1971 and has been supported by state funds distributed by the Justice of the Peace & Constables Association of Texas. The center was formed to become an official statutory requirement for officials, which developed into a relationship with major universities through grant support. Once affiliated with Lamar University, the training center solidified a long-lasting partnership with Texas State University in the early 1970s, which at the time was Southwest Texas State.

The center’s location in Austin may be physically far from TXST, but there is a constant and close connection between the two entities that transcends distance. The infrastructure invested by the university, such as internal policies and personnel support, have supplemented into this symbiotic relationship. TJCTC’s purpose is to provide mandated continuing judicial education for all justices of the peace in the state of Texas. New judges are mandated to attend the center for their first two years, and it is the official holder of their transcripts.



*Judge Brad Cummings*

The center is the sole provider for the required civil process education for elected constables. The civil process education focuses on procedures such as bailiff protocol, serving the court’s papers, and upholding post-judgement remedies. Deputy constables can elect to obtain their education elsewhere, yet the center sees consistently high enrollment. Many court clerks who do not have a requirement for formal education choose to enroll at the center. Clerks enroll as members of the public and earn skills as judicial representatives for the public. TJCTC is proud of the high enrollment of court clerks because of their dedication to upholding correct court procedures and maintaining professional codes of conduct when interacting with the public. Although the center does not give legal advice to the public, it provides resources available on their website for the public to navigate the court system, which in turn helps the courts to maintain their dockets and keep procedures flowing.

Separate conferences are held yearly for judges, clerks, constables, and deputy constables for civil processes. These conferences provide informational opportunities to introduce course objectives. Attendees can elect to take courses based on the civil needs of their county and their chosen program in the following September. Ten-hour workshops are also held for concentrated topics hosted by expert

guest speakers. Judges must receive 20 hours every year and constables must receive 20 hours of civil process education every four years. Justices, constables, and deputies receive certification after completion of mandatory education requirements.

TJCTC understood the responsibility of being the sole provider of mandated education for emerging justices and constables experiencing hardships. The center provided support for attendees who've suffered through environmental disasters, such as Hurricane Harvey. The TJCTC team reacted quickly and efficiently during the 2020 pandemic by broadening the accessibility of their training resources. They adamantly observe the national trends to modernize and prioritize the needs of their attendees. A universal challenge with the courts has been to combat complacency and follow the momentum to modernize civil proceedings. The center strives to look forward and anticipate the needs not just of the attendees, but also the public by association who are often self-represented litigants. Additional resources for the public are also provided in Spanish to allow for greater accessibility to justice for all. Citizens want to feel heard in the justice system and an overwhelming number of personnel in the judiciary want that goal to be a reality.



*Judge Nick Chu*

Ms. Whalen is honored to be associated with a dignified and dynamic team of 14 professionals, all of whom provide effective capabilities to adapt to an ever-changing civil education landscape. The teams consists of the following personnel: Bronson Tucker, General Counsel; Angie Varela, Associate Director; Sonya Rahrovi, Accountant; Rebecca Glisan, Director of Curriculum and Staff Attorney; Amber Myers, Director of Outreach and Staff Attorney; John Lackey, Staff Attorney; Mark Zuniga, Staff Attorney; Jessica Foreman, Education Manager; Loc Le, Justice of the Peace Program Administrator; Laura Villarreal, Registrar & Civil Process Program Administrator; Darby Swoboda, Court Personnel Program Administrator; Jeff Grajek, Web and IT; and April Williams, Office Coordinator. Ms. Whalen's commitment to being a compassionate leader of a hardworking team goes beyond her title as Executive Director as she ensures the center's personnel can proudly accomplish their professional goals.

For more information, please visit:

- [Texas Justice Court Training Center Page](#)
- [Justices of the Peace Overview](#)
- [Constables Overview](#)
- [Court Personnel Overview](#)
- [Legal Resources](#)
- [Additional Resources to the Public](#)



*TJCTC Faculty Development*