

## Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Committee 2021 Indigent Defense Awards

### **Warren Burnett Award**

*Named for the late legendary Texas Attorney Warren Burnett, the award recognizes extraordinary contributions to improving the quality of criminal legal representation to indigent Texans. The award honors either an individual or organization for their work in the courtroom, legislature or in the public sphere.*

#### **2021 Recipient: Mark Stevens (San Antonio, Texas)**

Mark Stevens is an esteemed leader of the Texas criminal defense community. For more than 20 years, he has dedicated his professional life to providing extraordinary legal services to indigent Texans in court and using his wisdom to educate seasoned colleagues and new attorneys.

Fellow attorneys and judges know him for tirelessly working to represent his clients with honesty and integrity at trial and on appeal. Mark is also well known for his impressive briefs and stellar oral arguments, including improving indigent defendants' representation by arguing many cases that have significantly contributed to a body of foundational criminal jurisprudence. For example, one of the most important Texas state court cases for indigent defendants, *De Freece v. State*, 848 S.W.2d 150, 155 (Tex. Crim. App.1993), was litigated by Mark Stevens. *De Freece* heralded indigent Texans' due process right to court-appointed experts to assist defense counsel, giving defense counsel the tools necessary to present a defense effectively. To this day, this case is heavily relied upon by all who defend indigent Texans. For these reasons, Mark is often the first choice for appointment in the most complex or high-profile cases.

Outside of fervently defending his clients, some of his other professional contributions to the criminal defense community include speaking and providing written resources for over 100 CLEs, mentoring fellow attorneys, and providing a free, updated library of papers, presentations, and motions on his website. Additionally, Mark was instrumental in starting an indigent criminal defense clinic at his alma mater, St. Mary's University School of Law. Several years ago, Mark's mentorship was formally recognized when the United States Supreme Court inducted him to serve as "learned counsel," throughout the nation for federal death penalty cases. Not only is he an excellent defender of indigent Texans, but his legacy includes a legion of excellent court-appointed counsel and public defenders throughout the State who have been personally trained and mentored by him.

### **Michael K. Moore Award for Excellence in Research or Writing in the Area of Indigent Criminal Defense**

*This award is named after Dr. Michael K. Moore for his pivotal role in several research and writing efforts that had a major effect on indigent defense in Texas. The award will be presented to an individual (including both private citizens and members of the Bar) or organization in recognition of exceptional research or writing that deals with indigent criminal defense and that represents a significant contribution to the knowledge and practices of the bench, bar, and scholarly communities.*

#### **2021 Recipient: Claire Buetow (Austin, Texas)**

Claire Buetow is the author of *Public Defender Primer*, published by the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC). Like many reports that have come before it, the *Primer* describes the advantages of public defender programs and the research showing that public defenders achieve better outcomes while reducing costs. However, two things set the *Primer* apart from similar works: first, it highlights

individual attorneys and public defender offices in Texas; and second, it provides a blueprint for setting up a public defender office in your community.

These two aspects make the *Primer* informative while also inspirational and incredibly practical. Too often, public defenders go without recognition for the essential role they play in the criminal justice system and in their local communities. Recognizing the hard-working attorneys and staff in Texas public defender offices highlights the value these individuals and offices bring to their communities, thus encouraging more leaders to consider a public defender office. Meanwhile, the practical guide to creating a public defense program shows that it is an achievable goal. Communities across Texas are already using the *Primer* to improve their public defense systems.