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Executive Director's Perspective: A New Year at TCDLA - By Melissa J. Schank

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There is always strength in numbers. The more individuals or organizations that you can rally to your cause, the better.

Mark Shields

I hope everyone started off the new year with a bang! It seems like each year, time passes faster and faster. We become burdened by more responsibilities and others' expectations. With all these expectations as well as impending deadlines, we can be overwhelmed. We must take care of ourselves and attend to our health. While taking care of personal well-being, attorneys are also tasked with another critical responsibility—their clients. This means taking care of your clients, making sure their mental health is considered so you can provide the best defense.

With that in mind, TCDLA would like to recognize the tireless leadership and dedicated support in this regard of Judge Barbara Hervey of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, chair of the Grants Committee and co-chair of the Judicial Commission on Mental Health. TCDLA would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and the Judicial Court Personnel Training Fund. Recently Judge Hervey and the CCA awarded TCDLA a mental health grant that allows TCDLA to provide additional mental health training as well as funding for travel stipends for attendees.

We have four CCA-funded seminars February 20-21, 2020, in Austin: a mix-and-match combination of Appellate, Veterans, Capital, and Mental Health sessions. We also have mental health seminars on our online CLE, though if you would like to view this material without CLE credit, we now host a video library.

In addition, TCDLA has a Mental Health Committee chaired by Alyse Ferguson and Melissa Shearer. The committee has held several meetings and is working hard to provide additional resources. Through the CCA, the committee has provided a Mental Health Resource Guide and a Mental Health pamphlet.

The Mental Health Resource Guide was created by Judge Hervey and is a publication of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. The Mental Health pamphlet—compiled by Chris Lopez, attorney for the Health and Human Services Commission—contains flow charts covering Chapter 46B (Incompetency to Stand Trial) and Chapter 46C (NGRI/Insanity Defense). Both, provided free courtesy of the grant, can be ordered through TCDLA by calling 512.478.2514 or on the TCDLA website, [\[3\]www.tcdla.com](http://www.tcdla.com), under publications.

In addition, all the grant-funded and TCDLA seminars are listed on the website. Please visit the site and sign up for one of the upcoming seminars. If you have particular interest in mental health seminars, email me at [\[4\]mschank@tcdla.com](mailto:mschank@tcdla.com).

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