

SUBJECT: Requiring Office of Court Administration oversight of specialty courts

COMMITTEE: Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Leach, Farrar, Y. Davis, Krause, Meyer, Neave, Smith, White
0 nays
1 absent — Julie Johnson

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dennis Borel, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; David Johnson, Grassroots Leadership; Bill Kelly, City of Houston Mayor’s Office; Shanna Igo, Texas Municipal League; Thomas Parkinson)
Against — None
On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* David Slayton, Texas Judicial Council, Office of Court Administration)

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 121.002(c) prohibits a specialty court program from operating until the program's judge, magistrate, or coordinator provides the Office of the Governor's Criminal Justice Division (CJD) with:

- written notice of the program;
- any resolution or other official declaration under which the program was established; and
- a copy of the applicable strategic plan that incorporates duties related to the supervision that will be required under the program.

Sec. 121.002(d) requires specialty court programs to comply with certain best practices recommended by the Specialty Courts Advisory Council and approved by the Texas Judicial Council and to report information on the performance of the program to the Criminal Justice Division.

Some suggest that coordinated oversight of specialty courts among various entities would improve their administration and more closely align the state's practices surrounding these courts with national practices.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2955 would prohibit a specialty court program from operating until the program's judge, magistrate, or coordinator provided certain information to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System, rather than to the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Office of the Governor. The bill would require such a program to report information on its performance to the Texas Judicial Council in addition to the CJD.

The bill also would require the Office of Court Administration to:

- provide technical assistance to specialty court programs upon request;
- coordinate with entities funded by CJD that provided services to specialty court programs;
- monitor specialty court programs' compliance with programmatic best practices; and
- notify the CJD about specialty court programs not in compliance with best practices.

The bill would require the Office of Court Administration to coordinate with and provide information to the CJD upon request.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.