

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R19836 YDB-F

H.B. 2955
By: Price et al. (Zaffirini)
State Affairs
5/10/2019
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The nearly two hundred specialty courts throughout Texas, including DWI courts, drug courts, veteran courts, and mental health courts, play an important role in our judicial system. Better coordination, however, is needed among the criminal justice division of the Office of the Governor, the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System (OCA), and the Texas Judicial Council (TJC).

H.B. 2955 would require OCA to coordinate with and provide information to the criminal justice division. It also would require specialty courts to register with OCA, rather than the criminal justice division, before beginning operations. What's more, OCA would be responsible for monitoring specialty court compliance with programmatic best practices, which are recommended by the Specialty Courts Advisory Council and approved by TJC. OCA would be required to notify the criminal justice division of noncompliance. Finally, OCA would provide technical assistance to specialty courts that request it. This would increase specialty court reporting efficiency while ensuring proper oversight.

H.B. 2955 amends current law relating to oversight of specialty court programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 121.002, Government Code, by amending Subsections (c) and (d) and adding Subsections (f) and (g), as follows:

(c) Prohibits a specialty court program (program), notwithstanding any other law, from operating until the judge, magistrate, or coordinator:

(1) provides to the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System (OCA), rather than the criminal justice division of the Office of the Governor (division):

(A)-(C) makes no changes to these paragraphs; and

(2) makes a conforming change to this subdivision.

(d) Requires a program to:

(1) makes no change to this subdivision; and

(2) report to the division and the Texas Judicial Council (TJC) any information required by the division or TJC regarding the performance of the program.

(f) Requires OCA to:

(1) on request provide technical assistance to the programs;

(2) coordinate with an entity funded by the division that provides services to programs;

(3) monitor compliance of the specialty court programs with the programmatic best practices as required by Subsection (d)(1); and

(4) notify the criminal justice division about each program that is not in compliance with the programmatic best practices as required by Subsection (d)(1).

(g) Requires OCA to coordinate with and provide information to the division on request of the division.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2019.