

**EVALUATING COLLECTION PRACTICES IN
SMALL-VOLUME TEXAS MUNICIPAL COURTS**

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EVALUATING COLLECTION PRACTICES IN SMALL-VOLUME TEXAS MUNICIPAL COURTS

By Bonnie Townsend

Abstract

The Lockhart Municipal Court is a locally funded court of limited jurisdiction. Like many small-volume municipal courts in Texas, it struggles with collections improvement in the current economic downturn. The goals of these fine-only courts are for defendants to comply with court orders while ensuring procedural fairness and preserving the integrity of the court. The purpose of this project is to evaluate collection practices in small-volume Texas Municipal Courts and to explore the most cost-effective measures to further the goal of compliance with court ordered fines and fees.

Current court collections literature was reviewed, and a survey of current collections practices of other small-volume courts was compiled to compare the effectiveness of each system. NCSC's CourTools, "Measure Seven" the Collection of Monetary Penalties was applied to the Lockhart Municipal Court to evaluate the court's collection improvement program for the month of April in 2007 and in 2008. Interviews with medium and large volume court staff were used to determine if the successful collection methods applied in the larger courts could also be cost-effectively applied to small-volume courts.

The findings indicate that most small-volume municipal courts focus on the post-warrant collection process with more coercive collections actions, and a shift in focus to pre-warrant compliance using written notices and follow-up phone calls, often leads to an increase in compliance rates. The initial use of CourTools "Measure Seven" can create a benchmark for

courts to compare compliance rates; continued use will monitor the success of new collections practices and supply the court with the required data to obtain additional resources.

The findings also suggest that creating a successful collections environment requires a change in the court's philosophy (Judicial Buy-In) and effectively using the collections resources available to the court will influence the "word on the street" that defendants will be held accountable for their actions. Some of these resources are training staff in collection phone calls, using applications for payment plans, participating in the "Great Texas Warrant Round-Up," and using multiple payment options to make it easier for defendants to comply with court ordered fines and fees. The interviews with the larger municipal courts in Texas reveal that some of the best and most cost-effective collection practices include:

- setting the expectation that fines and fees are due at time of sentencing,
- providing multiple payment options,
- issuing immediate notice of default and continued contact,
- verifying the defendant's information,
- using applications for extensions and payment plans and,
- performing community outreach.

Further study of the large-volume municipal courts in-house collections units might benefit smaller Texas municipal courts seeking to improve collections.

Introduction

The Lockhart Municipal Court is a limited jurisdiction court located in Caldwell County, Texas. As of September 1, 2010, 915 municipal courts were operating in 917 Texas cities (Annual Report for the Texas Judiciary, 2010). Municipal Courts and Justice Courts (Justice of the Peace Courts) have concurrent jurisdiction over criminal misdemeanor offenses punishable by fine-only. The court structure in Texas is complex and has overlapping jurisdictions in a number of courts. A chart outlining the court structure in Texas is included in Appendix A. In Turner and Johnson's article (Turner & Johnson, 2002), Texas municipal courts are divided into six categories differentiated by annual caseload:

- Mega – over 250,000
- High – 30,000 - 249,000
- Large – 12,000 – 29,999
- Medium – 5,000 – 11,999
- Small – 2,500 – 4,999
- Low – under 2,500

While 47 percent of municipal court cases in fiscal year 2001 were filed in the eight largest courts, the low-volume courts represent 49 percent of all Texas municipal courts (Turner & Johnson, 2002). The Lockhart Municipal Court is a small-volume court with an annual caseload ranging from 2,500-4,999.

Fiscal responsibility and compliance with court orders have become increasingly important to the municipal courts in part because of deep budget cuts caused by economic downturns. This project takes a snapshot of the Lockhart Municipal Court before and after the

implementation of a collections improvement plan. The National Center for State Courts' CourTools "Measure Seven" the Collection of Monetary Penalties was used to make the comparison. "Measure Seven" requires the collection of eight data elements:

1. Case number.
2. Date of the order of sentence.
3. Due date for final payment of the total monetary penalty.
4. Total monetary penalty in the case.
5. Amount of total monetary penalty received (collected) to date.
6. Total amount of restitution ordered in the case.
7. Amount received that is applied by the court to restitution.
8. Amount of restitution received that is disbursed to victims.

"Measure Seven" is one of the ten Trial Court Performance Standards published by NCSC in 2005 (Fines, Costs, and Fees Resource Guide). Data elements considering restitution are not a part of this project because the Lockhart Municipal Court, collected restitution in only two cases over the last nine years. The remaining data will provide the court with a baseline for tracking the progress of collections. Compliance rates will be compared to see if the new collection practices improved the collection of fines and fees.

A survey was distributed to 28 Texas municipal courts similar in size and caseload to the Lockhart Municipal Court. Survey questions were based on the Texas Collection Improvement Program key elements (Collection Improvement Program). This survey helped to determine which collection practices are being used by a representative sample of small-volume municipal courts in Texas. By identifying and comparing the collection practices of other similarly-sized

courts to those of the Lockhart Municipal Court, the expected findings will be the most effective collection practices available to small-volume municipal courts.

As noted above, the current economic downturn has made the collection of monetary penalties in courts more important than ever. For Texas courts that are locally funded such as Lockhart Municipal Court, the term “to do more with less” is a constant. This research project examines best collection practices and provides baseline data for the continued use of trial court performance standards. The desired outcome is to provide the Lockhart Municipal Court and other small-volume courts with the most cost-effective ways to improve collections while maintaining fair and equal justice to the citizens they serve.

Literature Review

Much research is dedicated to the subject of the collection of court fines and fees. The problem of collections is an ongoing concern that affects public trust and confidence in the courts. Government entities, as well as the public, are closely reviewing court expenditures and viewing them as a potential source of revenue (Klaversma, 2008, p. 1). One view is, “It is difficult to promote public trust and confidence in the judiciary without the courts supporting and encouraging programs and processes that improve the collection of fines and fees” (Id.). Klaversma’s review includes earlier Court Executive Development Program (CEDP) research projects along with other publications from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). It also includes NCSC CourTools, “Measure Seven” the Collection of Monetary Penalties. Information from earlier research is used to help evaluate collections in small-volume Texas Municipal Courts to ensure that best practices are being used and to identify additional cost-effective measures to increase compliance with court ordered sanctions in fine-only courts.

At the forefront of the movement for better collections are the views of judicial officers that uncollected fines and fees create fundamental problems for the courts in light of current fiscal crises. “Poor or haphazard enforcement reflects negatively on the courts and justice in general.” (Id. at 5). This statement sums up the feeling of many in the judicial system that enforcement of courts orders is an imperative component of any collections plan. Without the successful collection of fines and fees, the integrity of the courts is called into question. NCSC’s website states, “Consistent with the basic premises of fine administration, individual offenders must be made to pay their fines in order for society to have achieved its policy goals of punishment and deterrence and for the courts to maintain their credibility” (Klaversma, 2008

pp.1-4). This is particularly true for municipal and other fine-only courts because an unpaid fine reflects negatively on the integrity of the court.

According to Kitzy Daniels, the Court Services Director for the City of Austin Municipal Court, in her 1997 CEDP paper, “The citizen receives a traffic citation, waits 30-40 days, receives a delinquent notice, [*sic*] asks for a payment plan never to be heard from again.” Not only does Ms. Daniels find that citizens were accustomed to the Austin Municipal Court practices and used these as a way to delay or ignore the payment of fines and fees, but even with a collections team in place the collection rate for that court was 38 percent. Her recommendations were to develop procedures and goals, while defining employees’ roles in the collection process that would alleviate redundant practices (Daniels, 1997). Daniels’ recommendations are still relevant to collection programs today. Austin Municipal Court established an in-house collections unit in April 2006 (Collection Improvement Program) to comply with Article 103.0033 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure and nearly doubled its collection rate, to 74 percent, in 2009 (Performance Measures Austin Municipal Court). In 2005, Senate Bill 1863 added Article 103.0033 to the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, which mandates counties with populations of 50,000 or greater and cities with populations of 100,000 or greater to develop and implement collection improvement programs.

Past research indicates that a critical component of any collection improvement program is the expectation that all court costs, fees, and fines are usually due at the time of assessment. This idea of a collections atmosphere is the first on the list of best practices in a study done by Matthias and Klaversma (2009). Successful programs will focus on changes that provide the most improvement at the least cost (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009, p. 14). Matthias and

Klaversma (2009) outline the following best practices for collections from years of research on the subject:

- Create expectations through the fine collection atmosphere
- Practice leadership and commitment
- Set collection and information goals
- Use a systematic communication plan with defendants
- Establish follow up processes
- Consider forming a specialized collections unit
- Provide education and training
- Establish accountability: Control the collections inventory
- Manage the cost of collections
- Pursue interagency/inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

This checklist gives courts a summary of which practices are already in place and which practices could be implemented in the future (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009, pp. 33-34). These best practices developed from data provided by many different courts have helped to improve collections, thereby increasing public trust and confidence in the courts. The use of these best practices will be explored by this author using the checklist to determine which practices are currently being used, and which practices may be implemented in the future by the Lockhart Municipal Court.

In 2007, a CEDP paper was written on the application of NCSC CourTools Measure Seven, “The Collection of Monetary Penalties”. The National Center for State Courts defines Measure Seven as payments collected and distributed within established timelines, expressed as

a percentage of total monetary penalties ordered in specific cases (Fines, Costs, and Fees Resource Guide). Measure Seven was applied in 230 misdemeanor cases from eight courts in Arizona (Dybas, 2007). The conclusions reached by Julie A. Dybas, Manager with the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts (2007) are:

- The ability to measure compliance for the collection of monetary obligations is available and simple to apply.
- Equity-related practices result in higher overall compliance rates for collection of monetary penalties.
- Dramatic drop in overall compliance rate for cases with due date for final payment outside of established timeline hard to explain [*sic*].
- “Measure Seven” provides the court with the ability to measure compliance for the collection and disbursement of restitution.
- The due date for final payment is a critical component for measuring court performance.

The collection of delinquent fines and fees was studied by Robert Tobin in 1995. According to Tobin, the collection of money due courts has been hindered by a lack of accountability in both the federal and state court systems. He observes that court managers might have employed private organizations or hired attorneys to collect overdue accounts. Some state courts have implemented in-house collections programs while others find it cost-effective to contract collections to an outside law firm or collection agency. The Tobin (1995) study finds that the factors to consider when determining whether to use a contractor are:

- State law
- Ethics
- Perception of court dignity
- Governmental practices in the jurisdiction
- Computer capability of the court
- The extent of contractor responsibility
- Coercive credibility
- Cost-benefit

The alternative to outsourcing to a contractor is a notification system, ranging from mailing early notices to perhaps, as a last resort, some form of coercive action (Tobin, 1995). In Texas, it is not uncommon to see a combination of a notification system as well as contracting with an outside law firm or collection agency. In a 2004 report by Tobin, he notes that in recent information compiled by NCSC from 32 states, 15 states have imposed new court fees and 11 states have increased their collection efforts. He also states that “The whole revenue and fee area has become so crucial to long-term financial planning in courts that it should be documented and maintained” (Tobin, Learning from the Recession Experience, 2004).

The Annual Report for the Texas Judiciary (2010) states that there were more than 7.5 million cases filed in the state’s municipal courts in the year 2010. Collections in all Texas Municipal Courts were reported at \$747 million in 2010, a 1.7 percent increase from the previous year. Texas has been studying the collection of fines and fees at least since 1998, when the Office of Court Administration (OCA) initiated a voluntary model Collection Improvement Program (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009). The three attributes of a successful collections environment according to the Matthias and Klaversma study are court philosophy, community

perception, and resource commitment. Courts must agree internally on a collection philosophy and decide whether it will seek to change or influence the “word on the street,” and decide whether to commit resources to the collection of fines and fees. By the use of payment plans and other tools, monetary obligations can be collected and individuals can still feel they have experienced procedural fairness (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009). Different courts use different methods based on the laws of their state, the size of the jurisdiction, and available resources to them, but what remains constant in all successful collection programs is the consistency of the court’s practices and fairness.

Methods

Project Overview

The methods used in this research project include: 1) a survey of small-volume Texas Municipal Courts, 2) the application of CourTools Measure Seven, and 3) interviews with large and medium courts' staff. The first method used was a survey intended to get a general picture of what other small-volume municipal courts in Texas are using to enhance the collection of fines and fees. Secondly, CourTool Measure Seven was applied specifically to the Lockhart Municipal Court to take snapshots of collections before and after the implementation of collection improvement procedures. Thirdly, interviews were conducted with large and medium volume court personnel to gain knowledge from their experience with in-house collection units, and to examine the possibility of additional collection techniques that may be cost-effective tools for small-volume municipal courts.

Method 1: Court Survey

The municipal court survey showed that collection methods vary from court to court, especially in small-volume courts in Texas. The survey was designed and sent to small-volume courts to distinguish which collection methods they used and which they considered the most successful. The participating courts were asked to give their contact information for possible follow-up questions. The survey was based on the Texas Collection Improvement Program Key Elements (Collection Improvement Program). A list of collection improvement procedures was formulated from the key elements in Table 1, provided below. Court Administrators were asked to check-mark the procedures that are used in their courts.

Table 1: Texas Collection Improvement Program Key Elements

- 1. Staff or staff time dedicated to collection activities. This may include local staff or contractor employees.**
 - 2. Expectation that all court costs, fees, and fines are generally due at the time of sentencing or pleading.**
 - 3. Defendants are required to complete an application for extension of time to pay if payment in full is not made immediately.**
 - 4. Application information is verified and evaluated to establish an appropriate payment plan for the defendant.**
 - 5. Payment terms are usually strict (e.g., 50% of the total amount due must be paid within 48 hours; 80% within 30 days; and 100% within 60 days).**
 - 6. Alternative enforcement options (e.g., community service) are available for defendants that can demonstrate their inability to pay.**
 - 7. Defendants are closely monitored for compliance, and action is taken promptly for noncompliance. Actions include telephone contact, letter notification, and possible issuance of warrant.**
 - 8. Local staff may contract with private collection agencies or firms for the provision of collection services on seriously delinquent cases (61+ days), after in-house collection efforts are exhausted.**
 - 9. Application of statutorily permitted collection remedies, such as programs for nonrenewal of driver's license or vehicle registration.**
 - 10. Issuance and service of warrants, as appropriate.**
-

Survey Gizmo, an online survey tool, was used to create the survey. The survey was emailed to five courts for a pre-test. All five courts replied that the survey was easy to understand and only took 2-5 minutes to complete. The only suggestion for change was to change “FTE” to “full time employees” in questions #2 and #3 to ensure the questions were understood. This change was made to the survey before it was sent to all of the participating courts. The final survey is included in Appendix B.

To determine which municipal courts would be surveyed, information about city populations and municipal court caseloads was obtained from the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA). The OCA information was on an Excel spreadsheet, and 131 small-volume municipal courts, which had caseloads of 2500-4999, were listed. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the City of Lockhart, Texas has a population of 12,698, and there are 35 cities with populations between 10,000 and 17,000 listed in the OCA data. These 35 cities were selected for this study because their populations and caseloads were similar to those of the Lockhart Municipal Court. The municipal courts in these cities were contacted to ask for their participation in the survey, and of the 35 courts, 28 agreed to complete the survey. The survey was sent via a link to Survey Gizmo in an email to the 28 courts that agreed to participate and the court clerks were asked to complete the survey within 14 days. Of the 28 courts, 19 responded by the deadline.

Method 2: Court Data

NCSC CourTools, Measure Seven, “The Collection of Monetary Penalties” was applied to the Lockhart Municipal Court for the month of April 2007, before the implementation of collection improvement procedures, and the month of April 2008, after procedures were in place

for seven months. The collection of data was not difficult, but proved to be more time consuming than expected. The Lockhart Municipal Court uses the commercial case management software (CMS), InCode, through provider Tyler Technologies. Two reports were run through the case management center provided in the CMS. The first report covered cases for April 2007, before the implementation of collection improvement procedures. The second report covered cases for April 2008, after the implementation of collection improvement procedures. The case management reports included case numbers and date due, but because most cases were closed the reports did not give monetary amounts, date payments were ordered, or the information on non-cash credits applied to cases during the months studied. Therefore, each case was examined by locating the case in the CMS and getting the information needed from the case history. After the compilation of the information, the data was entered onto a spreadsheet. The template for this spreadsheet was obtained from the NCSC's website (CourTools). The spreadsheets applying CourTools – Measure Seven are included in Appendix C for April 2007 and Appendix D for April 2008.

Method 3: Court Interviews

Interviews with large and medium courts' staff were used to gain knowledge of collection procedures used by the larger courts to determine if additional cost-effective procedures could be used in the small-volume municipal courts in Texas. While medium-volume municipal courts are not state mandated to have in-house collection units, many have implemented collection improvement procedures based on their needs. Some Texas courts are on the Office of Court Administration's voluntary collections reporting program, where a collections report is done through a court's CMS and then entered onto the OCA's Collections Improvement Program website. The large-volume courts were mandated to implement in-house collection units in

2005, under Senate Bill 1863. The focus of the study's interview questions was to find out what is working for these larger courts and how it can be applied to the small-volume courts.

Questions were asked on the percentages of improvement, three most successful collection practices, three least successful collection practices, and the lessons learned along the way.

Questionnaires were sent via email, with any follow-up questions being done either by email or telephone calls. These interviews were originally planned to be held in person, but because of conflicting schedules and time restraints an alternative method was used. The interview questions are included in Appendix E.

Findings

This section will begin by summarizing the data collected from the survey of small-volume Texas municipal courts. The information gathered gives a representation of the collection methods currently being used by these small-volume courts. The data provides important statistics on how small-volume courts' staff handles collections in their courts. This section will also show the data from the Lockhart Municipal Court before and after a collection improvement plan was implemented by the court, and will conclude with the results from interviews with medium and large courts' staff.

1. Court Survey Data

As referenced in the methods section, the survey was based on the Texas Collection Improvement Program Key Elements. It is important to note that while all of the procedures in this program are used by the small-volume municipal courts surveyed to some degree, the pre-warrant procedures were used less frequently than the post-warrant procedures. In 90 percent of the courts surveyed *capias profines* were issued, while only 37% require an application for an extension of time to pay or have staff verify the defendants' information.

It was found that 84 percent of these courts closely monitor payment plans, but when a defendant defaults on a payment only 79 percent of the courts set show cause hearings to determine why payment has not been made timely. Show cause hearings help the judge to establish whether a defendant is unwilling or unable to make the payments agreed upon in earlier court proceedings, and to determine how to best handle the payment problem.

Based on the survey responses and the experiences of the Lockhart Municipal Court, many small-volume Texas municipal courts are finding an increase in the number of indigent

defendants coming before their courts due to the current economic climate. These courts are using community service as an option for their defendants to pay court ordered fines and fees. The survey showed that 79 percent of the courts use this option enabling the individuals with court ordered fines and fees to take responsibility while preserving the dignity of the court. The use of community service provides the ability for low-income defendants to pay their fines while helping the community.

Private law firms or collection agencies for seriously delinquent cases are used by a large number of small-volume municipal courts in Texas. These locally funded courts rely heavily on these agencies for collections because of the limited financial resources of their cities. Of the 19 respondents, 15 (79%) use these private agencies to enhance their collection efforts. While the outsourcing of cases to these private law firms or collection agencies is allowable by state law, the public's perception of the court's dignity may come into question because of the coercive methods that are sometimes used by these agencies.

A widely used resource in municipal courts in Texas is the Texas Failure to Appear Program, denying the renewal of a defendant's driver's license for failure to appear in court or failure to pay court ordered fines and fees. Another 79 percent of participants reported using this program as a way to improve collections. The courts have found that this program offered by the Texas Department of Public Safety (TXDPS) is a cost-effective way for them to augment the collection of these particular fine-only misdemeanor cases.

The issuance of warrants and *capias profines* in municipal courts is a more forceful method of collecting fines and fees due to the courts, compared to reminder notices or phone calls. Again 79 percent of the municipal courts participating in the survey reveal using law

enforcement to serve their outstanding warrants. Some courts report that they employ an officer, while others simply rely on their police departments to serve these warrants.

Of the 19 courts responding to the survey, 14 (74%) said that the court requires an application for a payment plan and 13 (68%) send out reminder notices to those defendants who fail to appear for court. Only 47 percent of the surveyed courts reported that there is the expectation that fines are due at time of sentencing, that there is staff time dedicated to collections, and that reminders are given to defendants with past due payment plans. The number of courts requiring an application for an extension of time to pay and staff verifying defendant's information dropped to 7 out of 19 (37%). There were only 3 (16%) courts that used the Scofflaw Program, which denies the renewal of vehicle registration when a defendant is in default with the court.

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of small-volume municipal courts concentrate their collection efforts on post-warrant collection procedures. Three initial questions posed to the participating courts were the number of full time employees, how many employees were dedicated to collections, and how many hours per week were spent on collections. It was found that small-volume courts typically have one to three full time employees. It was also found that 9 (47%) courts have one or two people dedicated to collections, and only 5 (26%) courts spent more than 8 hours per week on collection efforts. With limited resources and staff, the small-volume municipal courts have little time to devote to a major collections improvement program. More courts reported being involved with the Annual Texas State-Wide Warrant Round-Up, where more than 250 agencies around the state work together to arrest those individuals with outstanding Class "C" misdemeanor warrants, because of the media attention that is given to this event. Even courts that do not participate in the annual event have seen increases in collections

during the time the event is happening. Other collection procedures reported by the courts in an open ended question were collection phone calls; skip search programs to find good addresses, and notices mailed to defendants informing them of future collection procedures, such as collection agencies. A complete summary of responses from the survey is included in Appendix F.

Table 2: Collection Procedures Used by Courts

	No. of Responses	% of Total Respondents
Capias Profines Issued	17	90%
Monitors Payment Plans	16	84%
Comm. Service Available as Paymt. Option	15	79%
Sets Show Cause Hearings	15	79%
Private Agency for Delinquent Cases	15	79%
Denies DL Renewal	15	79%
Law Enforce. Serves Warrants	15	79%
Application required for Payment Plan	14	74%
Reminders Sent on FTA's	13	68%
Staff Time Dedicated to Collections	9	47%
Fines Due at Sentencing	9	47%
Reminders on Past Due Plans	9	47%
Application Required for Extension	7	37%
Def. Info Verified by Staff	7	37%
Denies Registration	3	16%

2. Court Data Results

NCSC's CourTools Measure Seven, "Collection of Monetary Penalties" was applied to data collected from April 2007 and April 2008 to compare collection rates before and after the

implementation of collections improvement procedures in the Lockhart Municipal Court. The Lockhart Municipal Court, like many small-volume municipal courts in Texas, has struggled with collections improvement. In October 2007, the Lockhart Municipal Court executed a Compliance and Collections Program to improve the collection of fines and fees in the court. The program was designed to focus on pre-warrant procedures as well as post-warrant procedures. This Compliance and Collections Program is included in Appendix G.

Before the Compliance and Collections Program was put into place, the application of CourTools Measure Seven revealed that collections in the Lockhart Municipal Court were on a steady decline. For the month of April 2007, the preliminary compliance rate was 59 percent and the overall compliance rate was 65 percent. However, after the program was in place for seven months, the preliminary compliance rate in April 2008 went up to 62 percent with an overall compliance rate of 84 percent. These increases are attributed to a shift in focus to pre-warrant compliance in the court. Many of the pre-warrant procedures were not practiced at the court prior to the implementation of the Compliance and Collections Program in October 2007. Some of the pre-warrant procedures included reminder notices, phone calls on past due payments and failure to appear on an initial appearance date, and the monitoring of payment plans and community service. A law enforcement officer was employed by the Lockhart Municipal Court during this period and was assigned to all pre-warrant and post warrant procedures. Figure 1 gives a comparison of the compliance rates for April 2007 and April 2008. The preliminary compliance rate was up 3 percent and the overall compliance rate was up 19 percent, which indicates that the pre-warrant procedures positively impacted collections in the court.

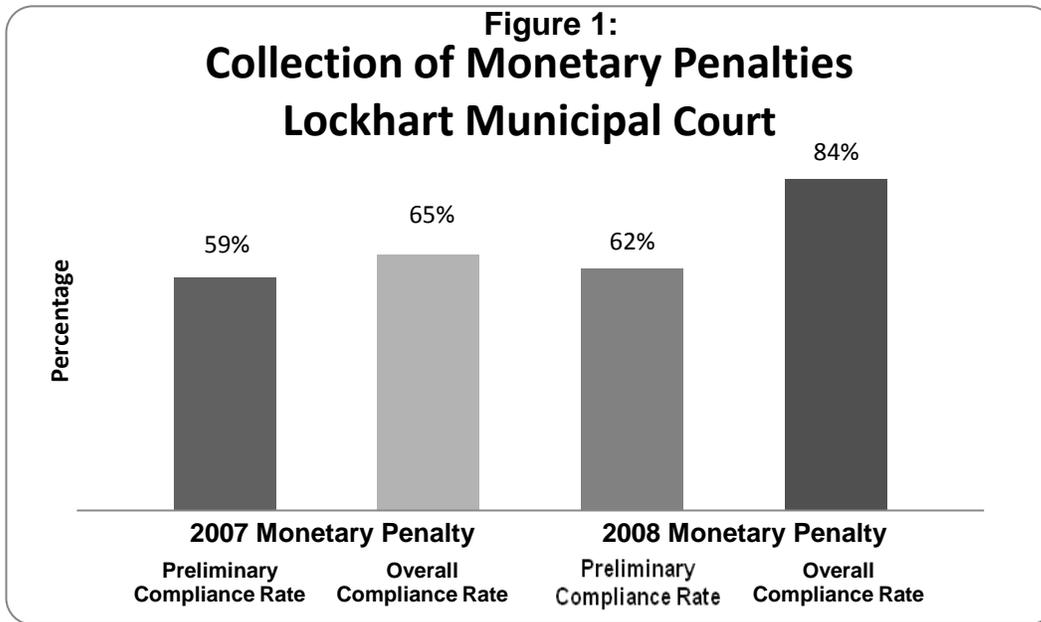


Figure 1. A Comparison of April 2007(before collections improvement plan) and April 2008 (after collections improvement plan) compliance rates.

3. Court Interviews

Interviews with court personnel from medium and large volume courts were conducted to assess what could be learned from their experiences with collections improvement. Procedures used in collections in the larger courts cannot always be practically applied to small-volume courts due to the limited resources in the smaller courts, but the lessons gleaned from their successes and failures can assist smaller courts in preparing a collections improvement plan. Question number six asked if the court had defendants fill out an application for an extension or payment plan. The courts that responded affirmatively were asked to provide a copy of the application used in their courts. These applications are included in Appendix H.

The medium-volume courts are not required by law to have in-house collections units; however, due to rapid population growth in many small Texas cities, courts are transitioning

from small to medium-volume courts very quickly. The experiences of medium-volume courts such as Bryan and Seguin, Texas that have made this transition can aid the smaller courts faced with imminent expansion. The court administrators of Bryan and Seguin, Texas agreed to answer the interview questions and answered follow-up questions as well. Both courts have witnessed an increase in their collections and said that while there is no formal collections improvement plan in place, both courts have procedures in place for moving toward collection improvement. Bryan has a City Marshal's unit with four officers that are under the direct supervision of the court. Seguin has a Warrant Officer who is under the supervision of the police department, but is assigned to the court. Both courts say that contact with the defendants is imperative in gaining compliance. When asked what "the word on street" was concerning expectations from the court, the answers varied. Bryan reports that defendants know that they will be granted 30 days to pay in all situations. Seguin says that defendants know the court will work with them as long as they keep in contact with the court. The two courts agree that continued contact with defendants is crucial to their efforts in collections improvement and that most of the long term options do not work well. The most important lesson learned in the Bryan Municipal Court was the need for judicial buy in and Seguin Municipal Court advises flexibility with collections plan. Table 3 is a summary of the answers from Bryan and Seguin Municipal Courts.

Table 3: Medium-Volume Courts Responses

Interview Question	Bryan	Seguin
1. Collection Improvement Plan	No	No
2. Date Plan Implemented	N/A	N/A
3. % Improved	1%	8%
4. Most Successful Practices	E-Citations Phone & online payments Computer call system	Community Outreach Partial payments/extensions Warrant Officer contact
5. Least Successful Practices	OmniBase/DPS FTA Program Long term payment plans Door hangers	Collection agency Mailing reminders Warrant Round Up
6. Application for Ext. /Payment. Plan	No	Yes
7. Provide copy of Application	N/A	Yes
8. Important Lessons	Judicial support needed	Flexibility needed

The Austin Municipal Court is a large-volume court with an in-house collections unit that employs eight people. Staff duties include verifying defendant information, telephone calls, and the operation of the court’s compliance office. The court established its in-house collections unit in 1999 to focus on post warrant activities and in 2001 shifted its focus to pre-warrant compliance. The improvement in the 120 day collection rate is reported at 10 percent. The Austin Municipal Court was state mandated to implement a collections improvement program in 2006 that follows the OCA model collections improvement plan, and they continue to adjust the court’s plan to improve collections. Austin Municipal Court’s best practices include setting the expectation (“word on the street”), using an application for extensions and payment plans, and immediate contact by telephone and/or notice by mail. The Austin Municipal Court believes that when it remains focused on compliance, the revenue will follow. The court continuously

monitors its efforts to ensure the plan is improving collections, and change is implemented, if needed, to maintain the effectiveness of the program.

The Waco Municipal Court is a medium-volume court with an annual caseload of 11,776, and is state mandated to have an in-house collections unit because the city has a required population of 124,000. Waco's collection unit consists of two full-time employees, a Collections Administrator and a Deputy Court Clerk. Waco implemented their collections improvement program in 2003, three years before the legislation was passed requiring it. The court has seen no increase in collections since 2008. The limited resources of the Waco Municipal Court made it difficult to comply with state collection mandates, according to the court administrator. The Waco Municipal Court's best collection practices are the Annual State-Wide Warrant Round-Up, postcard campaigns (notification), and sending cases over 60 days old to their collection agency. The Waco Municipal Court staff reports that the many changes to their collections program caused by state requirements have sometimes confused staff and defendants, resulting in the perception ("word on the street") that it is easy to delay payment in this court. Table 4 summarizes the interviews with the Austin and Waco Municipal Courts.

Table 4: Large-Volume Courts Responses

Interview Question	Austin	Waco
1. Collection Improvement Plan	Yes	Yes
2. Date Plan Implemented	1999	2003
3. % improved	10%	None
4. Most successful collection practices	Setting an expectation Applications Immediate contact/notice	Warrant Round-Up Postcard campaigns Collection Agency
5. Least successful practices	Not gathering enough info Only offering in-person payment Using only warrant or OmniBase	Jail time credits Inconsistent payment plans Making rules to fit exceptions
6. Application for ext. /payment plan	Yes	Yes
7. Provide copy of application	Yes	Yes
8. Important lessons	Focus on compliance	Minimal policy changes

Austin Municipal Court reports that the least successful practices are assuming a defendant cannot pay or comply by not gathering enough information, having limited payment options, and using only post-warrant procedures. Waco Municipal Court states that inconsistent payment plans, defendants’ waiting for jail time credit, and constantly changing the collection rules are ineffective as well. In both courts, it is suggested that changes are done one step at a time so it can be determined how the change impacts the collections program. Complete answers to the interview questions with both the medium and large-volume courts are included in Appendix I.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the Court Survey, the use of CourTools Measure Seven, and interviews with medium and large court staff provide important information on collections improvement in Texas Municipal Courts. Many collection practices can be adapted for use in the small-volume Texas Municipal Courts, increasing compliance with court ordered fines and fees.

Conclusion 1: Small-volume Texas Municipal Courts focus on post-warrant collections indicating minimal compliance with court orders.

Results from the court survey show that most small-volume Texas Municipal Courts focus on post-warrant collections. Findings indicate that 90 percent issue capias profines and only 37 percent use an application for an extension of time to pay. While 74 percent of courts are closely monitoring payment plans, only 47 percent sent out notices of past due payment. Before a shift in focus to pre-warrant collections, the preliminary compliance rate in the Lockhart Municipal Court was 59 percent and the overall compliance rate was 65 percent.

Recommendation 1: Shift the court's focus to pre-warrant compliance from post-warrant, with close monitoring and immediate notice of default.

Compliance with court orders impacts the dignity of the court and has a key effect on the collection of fines and fees in fine-only misdemeanor courts. A shift in focus to pre-warrant practices can enhance a court's performance and reflect positively on compliance rates. Collection practices that are both cost-effective and successful include: 1) Reminder notices sent on default of payment and failure to appear, 2) Staff time dedicated to collections, 3) Use of an application for an extension of time to pay, and 4) Defendant's information verified by staff.

Continued contact by the court not only provides the defendants a feeling of procedural fairness, but offers the court a higher rate of compliance with court orders.

Conclusion 2: NCSC’s CourTools - Measure Seven, “The Collection of Monetary Penalties” provides the court an efficient method for monitoring compliance rates.

Monitoring compliance rates is an important part of any collections improvement program. Measuring the court’s current compliance rates and comparing rates after new collection practices are introduced will provide important collections data to the court. The preliminary information can supply a benchmark for the court and continuous measurements can assist court staff in analyzing the successes or failures of new collection practices.

Recommendation 2: Use NCSC’s CourTools - Measure Seven before and after the implementation of new collection practices.

CourTools Measure Seven, “The Collection of Monetary Penalties” was applied specifically to the Lockhart Municipal Court before and after the implementation of a collections improvement program designed for a small-volume Texas municipal court. The overall compliance rate for this small-volume municipal court went up 19 percent after new collection practices were put in place. The measurements done in this study were taken before and after new collection practices were introduced into the court. The results indicate that the best way to determine what collections practices will improve is to measure current compliance rates, implement one or two new practices, and continue to measure compliance rates as new practices are introduced to evaluate their success rate. The template for CourTools Measure Seven is readily available on NCSC’s website (CourTools). The information derived from the use of

CourTools Measure Seven can also assist court administration during budget preparations, presenting the data to support the need for additional resources for the court.

Conclusion 3: Judicial buy in, the “word on the street” and the commitment of resources are critical to a successful collections improvement program.

As referenced in the literature review, the court’s philosophy, the community’s perception, and the commitment of resources are all proven successful attributes of a collections environment (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009, p. 12). The court’s collections philosophy that fines and fees are due at time of sentencing creates the perception or “word on the street” that the court will hold a defendant accountable for their actions. The survey findings and interview responses indicate that courts with all three of these attributes obtain a higher compliance rate, thereby increasing collections in fine-only misdemeanor courts.

Recommendation 3: Review all court practices and resources to develop a plan to integrate successful collection practices.

A thorough review of court practices is vital to the success of a collections improvement program. Such a review was conducted in the Lockhart Municipal Court, in April 2007. A meeting with a representative from the Texas OCA was held to assist the court with the array of collection practices available. A plan was developed to implement new collections practices within six months. Meetings with the municipal judge, prosecutor, law enforcement, and court staff were important to facilitate the change in focus of the court from post-warrant compliance to pre-warrant compliance. Both medium and large court staff report that the court philosophy begins at the bench and judicial buy in is imperative to be successful in collection efforts in fine-only misdemeanor courts. Including judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement, as well as court

staff in the development of a collections improvement program will give all court personnel a stake in the collections process and outcome.

Community perception of the court's practices or "the word on the street" plays a major role in the ability of the court to be successful in the collection of court ordered fines and fees. The research in this study finds that courts that create expectations through the fine collection atmosphere and use a systematic communication plan with defendants, which are two of the best practices found in the Matthias and Klaversma study (Matthias & Klaversma, 2009, pp. 33-34), have seen much greater collections improvement than those that do not. The Austin Municipal Court saw an increase of 10 percent in their 120 day collection rate, with their focus on compliance, and the Seguin Municipal Court realized an 8 percent increase, with their community outreach program. The community's perception will also depend on the consistent use of the courts collection practices. Continuous change and making exceptions to the rule were reported by the Waco Municipal Court as confusing to court staff and defendants alike. Consistency in collections practices by the court gives the public the perception of procedural fairness and promotes public trust and confidence.

The commitment of resources is the most difficult attribute for small-volume Texas municipal courts to achieve. These courts are locally funded and the current financial downturn has negatively impacted funding for the courts. The Lockhart Municipal Court was afforded a City Marshal in October 2007, when the court was shifting its focus to pre-warrant compliance and implementing new collection practices. The findings of this research reveal that the Marshal's position that was dedicated to pre-warrant and post warrant compliance increased preliminary compliance rate by 3 percent and overall compliance by 19 percent. Most small-volume municipal courts do not have a law enforcement officer dedicated to the court and

currently the Lockhart Municipal Courts' position is vacant and frozen due to budget cuts. Further study of current compliance rates are needed to evaluate the effect this had on collections in the Lockhart Municipal Court.

However, there are a number of other resources that are cost-effective and relatively easy to implement:

- Use TMCEC forms available on their website (application for payment plan).
- Train current court personnel in collection phone calls.
- Participate in Annual State-Wide Warrant Round Up.
- Tier fine schedules to encourage early appearance.
- Use as many payment options as possible.
- Update defendant's information as necessary.
- Community Outreach.
- Multi-Agency/Multi-Jurisdictional Cooperation.

Committing the resources currently available to the court and documenting the successes and failures of the use of the resources can also help the court to retain resources in the future by providing data on the cost-effectiveness of the resources.

Conclusion 4: Small-volume Texas Municipal Courts can gain valuable information on collections improvement from the larger Texas Municipal Courts.

The interviews done in this study touched on the in-house collections units of Austin and Waco, a large and a medium-volume Texas Municipal Court, respectively. The two courts have very different in-house collections units due to the resources available to each court. Each court has a different idea of the most successful practices, although a recurring theme of immediate

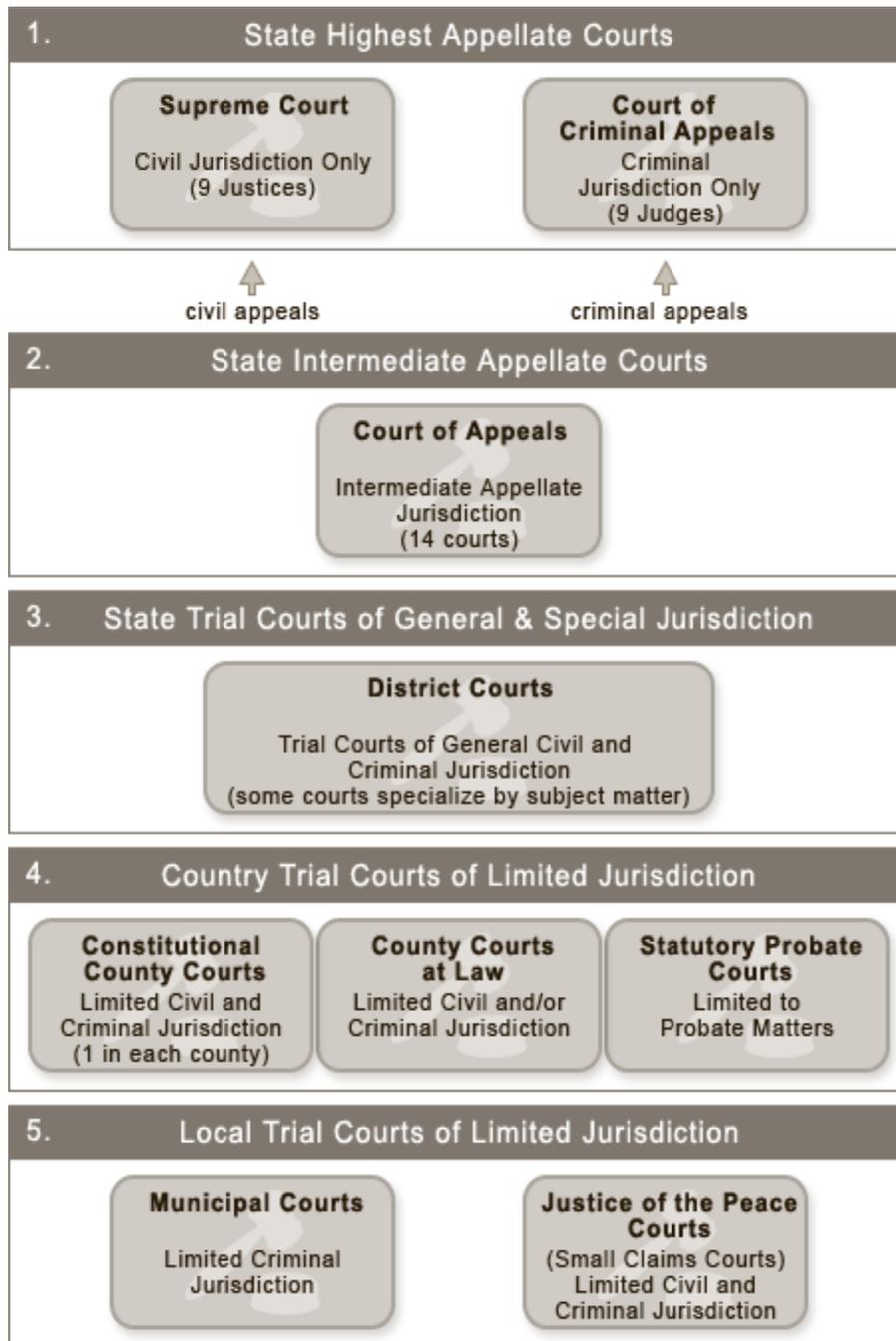
and continued contact is evident. The lessons learned in this project from the larger courts have been particularly useful and should be studied further.

Recommendation 4: Do a more in depth study of current in-house collections units in medium and large-volume Texas Municipal Courts.

The Texas OCA has a list of 29 municipalities that have or will implement in-house collections units (Collection Improvement Program). The responses from the medium and large-volume courts in this project concerning the lessons learned are that judicial support, flexibility, focus on compliance, and minimal policy changes are necessary. These factors can be applied to any collections improvement plan with minimal cost. The responses indicate that the most cost-effective measures are among the best practices to improve the courts' compliance rate. A future study of the in-house collections units in medium and large-volume Texas municipal courts would give the smaller Texas municipal courts a more comprehensive understanding of what a formal collections plan can do to improve compliance with court orders in fine-only misdemeanor courts.

Appendix A: Court Structure of Texas

The Court Structure of Texas



Appendix B: Survey on Court Collection Practices

Survey on Court Collection Practices

1. Please enter your court and contact information in the space provided. ***This question is required**

2. How many full time employees do you employ? ***This question is required**

3. How many full time employees are dedicated to collections? ***This question is required**

4. Please estimate how many hours per week is dedicated to collections. ***This question is required**

5. From the following list please check all the collection procedures that are used in your court. ***This question is required**

- Staff time is dedicated to collections.
- Court conveys the expectation that all fines and fees are due at sentencing.
- Court sends out reminder letters to defendant's that have failed to appear on initial appearance date.
- Defendants fill out an application for an extension.
- Defendants fill out an application for a payment plan.
- Defendant's information is verified by staff.
- Community service is available to those who show their inability to pay.
- Court monitors payment plans.
- Court sends out reminder notices on past due payment plans.
- Court sets show cause hearings for noncompliance cases.
- Capias Profines are issued for noncompliance of court orders.
- Court contracts with a private collection agency or firm for delinquent cases.

- Court denies the renewal of driver's license (Texas Failure to Appear Program).
- Court denies the renewal of vehicle registration (SCOFFLAW).
- Law enforcement serves the court's warrants.

6. If your court uses additional collection procedures please list them in the space provided.

0%

Survey Software powered by SurveyGizmo



**Appendix C: CourTools “Measure Seven” spreadsheet
Lockhart Municipal Court before Collection Improvement Program**

Collection of Monetary Penalties

Worksheet Instructions

- a. Use this spreadsheet to enter case file data; as data are entered, results are generated and plotted automatically.
- b. Up to 25 individual case files can be entered.
- c. Data may only be entered in the gray cells. An acceptable input will change the cell color from gray to white and the input text color will turn to maroon.
- d. All white colored cells with black text are locked.

Lockhart Municipal Court -Before Collection Improvement Procedures

Court Case Number	Total Penalties							
	Date Ordered	Date Due	Total Amount Ordered	Actual Dollars Collected	Preliminary Compliance Rate	Conversion Credit Dollar Value	Overall Monetary Penalties Collected	Overall Compliance Rate
038650-01	4/2/2007	4/2/2007	\$202	\$12	6%	\$190	\$202	100%
69512-01	4/2/2007	4/2/2007	\$145	\$145	100%		\$145	100%
69513-01	4/2/2007	4/2/2007	\$137	\$137	100%		\$137	100%
72938-01	4/2/2007	4/2/2007	\$206	\$206	100%		\$206	100%
03000438-01	4/3/2007	4/3/2007	\$260	\$160	62%	\$100	\$260	100%
56819-01	4/3/2007	4/3/2007	\$243	\$243	100%		\$243	100%
69514-01	4/3/2007	4/3/2007	\$147	\$147	100%		\$147	100%
D2994-01	4/3/2007	4/3/2007	\$175	\$175	100%		\$175	100%
69368-01	3/16/2007	4/4/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
74224-01	1/22/2007	4/4/2007	\$188	\$188	100%		\$188	100%
72623-01	10/12/2006	4/5/2007	\$188	\$188	100%		\$188	100%
0045773-01	4/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$181	\$181	100%		\$181	100%
0045773V-01	4/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$266	\$266	100%		\$266	100%
69495-01	3/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
73097-01	4/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
73097-02	4/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
73620-01	12/13/2006	4/9/2007	\$187	\$187	100%		\$187	100%
74001-01	3/8/2007	4/9/2007	\$100	\$100	100%		\$100	100%
64813-01	4/10/2007	4/10/2007	\$221	\$221	100%		\$221	100%
64813V-01	4/10/2007	4/10/2007	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
72302-01	9/20/2006	4/10/2007	\$178	\$178	100%		\$178	100%
69403-01	4/11/2007	4/11/2007	\$308	\$308	100%		\$308	100%
73606-01	12/8/2006	4/11/2007	\$151	\$151	100%		\$151	100%

74088-01	12/14/2006	4/11/2007	\$143	\$143	100%		\$143	100%
69526-01	4/12/2007	4/12/2007	\$165	\$165	100%		\$165	100%
69528-01	4/12/2007	4/12/2007	\$129	\$129	100%		\$129	100%
74059-01	12/27/2006	4/12/2007	\$133	\$133	100%		\$133	100%
03000311-01	3/15/2007	4/13/2007	\$173	\$173	100%		\$173	100%
03000311-02	3/15/2007	4/13/2007	\$210	\$210	100%		\$210	100%
73212-01	1/25/2007	4/13/2007	\$383	\$383	100%		\$383	100%
73212-02	1/25/2007	4/13/2007	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
73212-03	1/25/2007	4/13/2007	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
73212-04	1/25/2007	4/13/2007	\$235	\$235	100%		\$235	100%
001061-01	3/27/2007	4/16/2007	\$110	\$110	100%		\$110	100%
001062-01	3/27/2007	4/16/2007	\$110	\$110	100%		\$110	100%
69376-01	8/3/2006	4/16/2007	\$271	\$0	0%	\$271	\$271	100%
69523-01	2/5/2007	4/16/2007	\$100	\$0	0%	\$100	\$100	100%
70402-01	3/19/2007	4/16/2007	\$160	\$160	100%		\$160	100%
70525-01	4/16/2007	4/16/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
73882-01	1/10/2007	4/18/2007	\$333	\$0	0%	\$333	\$333	100%
001131-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$273	\$273	100%		\$273	100%
58208-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$205	\$105	51%	\$100	\$205	100%
58208-02	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$150	\$150	100%		\$150	100%
58208F-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$179	\$179	100%		\$179	100%
59197-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$243	\$243	100%		\$243	100%
59197V-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$227	\$227	100%		\$227	100%
69282-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$108	\$108	100%		\$108	100%
69498-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$162	\$162	100%		\$162	100%
69541-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
71482-01	4/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
00870-01	4/19/2007	4/19/2007	\$210	\$210	100%		\$210	100%
00870F-01	4/19/2007	4/19/2007	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
69281-01	4/5/2007	4/19/2007	\$149	\$149	100%		\$149	100%
69540-01	4/19/2007	4/19/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
70353-01	4/19/2007	4/19/2007	\$137	\$137	100%		\$137	100%
69461-01	4/20/2007	4/20/2007	\$179	\$179	100%		\$179	100%
69297-01	4/20/2007	4/20/2007	\$157	\$157	100%		\$157	100%
69404-01	4/23/2007	4/23/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
73036-01	4/23/2007	4/23/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
73824-01	3/3/2007	4/23/2007	\$383	\$383	100%		\$383	100%
73824F-01	3/3/2007	4/23/2007	\$208	\$208	100%		\$208	100%
69326-01	1/25/2007	4/24/2007	\$160	\$160	100%		\$160	100%
69287-01	4/25/2007	4/25/2007	\$141	\$141	100%		\$141	100%
69539-01	4/25/2007	4/25/2007	\$145	\$145	100%		\$145	100%
0048265-01	4/26/2007	4/26/2007	\$237	\$237	100%		\$237	100%
0048265V-01	4/26/2007	4/26/2007	\$266	\$266	100%		\$266	100%

0052252-01	4/26/2007	4/26/2007	\$227	\$227	100%		\$227	100%
0052252V-01	4/26/2007	4/26/2007	\$227	\$227	100%		\$227	100%
69300-01	4/26/2007	4/26/2007	\$151	\$151	100%		\$151	100%
69362-01	3/28/2007	4/26/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
70520-01	4/27/2007	4/27/2007	\$173	\$173	100%		\$173	100%
03000440-01	4/30/2007	4/30/2007	\$260	\$0	0%	\$260	\$260	100%
64719-05	1/11/2007	4/30/2007	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
69295-01	4/30/2001	4/30/2007	\$160	\$160	100%		\$160	100%
69301-01	4/30/2007	4/30/2007	\$118	\$118	100%		\$118	100%
72517-01	2/5/2007	4/30/2007	\$143	\$143	100%		\$143	100%
73038-01	4/30/2007	4/30/2007	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
73600-01	12/1/2006	4/30/2007	\$194	\$194	100%		\$194	100%
6345201	10/3/2006	4/30/2007	\$217	\$98	45%		\$98	45%
69515-01	4/16/2007	4/23/2007	\$137	\$103	75%		\$103	75%
72501-01	12/19/2007	4/19/2007	\$188	\$90	48%		\$90	48%
64466-01	8/14/2006	4/2/2007	\$200	\$50	25%		\$50	25%
73921F-01	3/3/2007	4/30/2007	\$208	\$190	91%		\$190	91%
64776-01	4/4/2007	4/30/2007	\$193	\$0	0%		\$0	
64776V-01	4/4/2007	4/30/2007	\$208	\$0	0%		\$0	
64807-01	4/4/2007	4/30/2007	\$233	\$0	0%		\$0	
64807V-01	4/4/2007	4/30/2007	\$208	\$0	0%		\$0	
64719V-01	4/4/2007	# 4/30/2007	\$162	\$0	0%		\$0	
69435-01	3/19/2007	4/18/2007	\$188	\$150	80%		\$150	80%
70426-01	3/19/2007	4/18/2007	\$185	\$93	50%		\$93	50%
67202-01	3/3/2007	4/2/2007	\$200	\$102	51%		\$102	51%
72623-02	10/12/2006	4/11/2007	\$319	\$14	4%		\$14	4%
67202V-01	3/3/2007	4/2/2007	\$209	\$0	0%		\$0	
67773F-01	2/21/2007	4/23/2007	\$258	\$0	0%		\$0	
03000395-01	12/18/2006	4/5/2007	\$235	\$0	0%		\$0	
67845-01	12/18/2006	4/5/2007	\$433	\$0	0%		\$0	
67845-02	3/31/2007	4/30/2007	\$233	\$0	0%		\$0	
67845F-01	3/31/2007	4/30/2007	\$258	\$0	0%		\$0	
69360-01	3/1/2007	4/1/2007	\$237	\$0	0%		\$0	
73230-01	1/8/2007	4/5/2007	\$285	\$0	0%		\$0	
73170-01	2/22/2007	4/22/2007	\$235	\$0	0%		\$0	
73911-02	3/8/2007	4/6/2007	\$183	\$0	0%		\$0	
73834-01	3/14/2007	4/14/2007	\$287	\$0	0%		\$0	
74105-01	1/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$250	\$0	0%		\$0	
72789-01	3/23/2007	4/23/2007	\$288	\$0	0%		\$0	
72789V-01	3/23/2007	4/23/2007	\$258	\$0	0%		\$0	
66075F-01	3/14/2007	4/14/2007	\$258	\$0	0%		\$0	
71349-01	4/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$188	\$87	46%		\$87	46%
70338-01	2/12/2007	4/12/2007	\$188	\$0	0%		\$0	

73179-01	1/18/2007	4/18/2007	\$343	\$0	0%		\$0	
69451-01	4/5/2007	4/5/2007	\$188	\$0	0%		\$0	
73983-01	3/9/2007	4/9/2007	\$218	\$20	9%		\$20	9%
72501-02	12/19/2006	4/18/2007	\$133	\$0	0%		\$0	0%
73911-01	2/7/2007	4/6/2007	\$188	\$107	57%		\$107	57%
69446-01	3/29/2007	4/28/2007	\$383	\$100	26%		\$100	26%
56663-02	3/3/2007	4/2/2007	\$398	\$125	31%	\$50	\$175	44%
56663F-01	3/3/2007	4/2/2007	\$417	\$150	36%	\$50	\$200	48%
56663F-02	3/3/2007	4/2/2007	\$352	\$125	36%	\$50	\$175	50%
73970-01	12/13/2006	4/12/2007	\$183	\$0	0%		\$0	
73168-01	1/24/2007	4/21/2007	\$198	\$100	51%		\$100	51%
71349-02	4/9/2007	4/16/2007	\$333	\$0	0%		\$0	
74061-01	1/11/2007	4/5/2007	\$336	\$175	52%		\$175	52%

Total Average	59%	65%
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**Appendix D: CourTools “Measure Seven” spreadsheet
Lockhart Municipal Court after Collection Improvement Program**

Worksheet Instructions

- Use this spreadsheet to enter case file data; as data are entered, results are generated and plotted automatically.
- Up to 25 individual case files can be entered.
- Data may only be entered in the gray cells. An acceptable input will change the cell color from gray to white and the input text color will turn to maroon.
- All white colored cells with black text are locked.

Lockhart Municipal Court - After Collection Procedures

Court Case Number	Total Penalties							
	Date Ordered	Date Due	Total Amount Ordered	Actual Dollars Collected	Preliminary Compliance Rate	Conversion Credit Dollar Value	Overall Monetary Penalties Collected	Overall Compliance Rate
72244-01	3/18/2008	4/1/2008	\$143	\$143	100%		\$143	100%
74682-01	4/1/2008	4/1/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
70070-01	1/3/2008	4/1/2008	\$173	\$173	100%		\$173	100%
71072-01	4/2/2008	4/2/2008	\$312	\$312	100%		\$312	100%
71072-02	4/2/2008	4/2/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
71072-03	4/2/2008	4/2/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
74385-01	4/2/2008	4/2/2008	\$157	\$157	100%		\$157	100%
0051762-01	12/2/2007	4/3/2008	\$253	\$0	0%	\$253	\$253	100%
75660-01	4/2/2008	4/2/2008	\$169	\$169	100%		\$169	100%
0051762V-01	3/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$227		0%	\$227	\$227	100%
0053555-01	3/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$289		0%	\$289	\$289	100%
0053555-02	3/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$455		0%	\$455	\$455	100%
0053555F-01	3/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$227		0%	\$227	\$227	100%
024245-01	4/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$99	\$99	100%		\$99	100%
042943-01	2/19/2008	4/3/2008	\$201	\$201	100%		\$201	100%
042943-02	2/19/2008	4/3/2008	\$400	\$400	100%		\$400	100%
042943V-01	2/19/2008	4/3/2008	\$225	\$225	100%		\$225	100%
70065-01	3/6/2008	4/3/2008	\$213	\$213	100%		\$213	100%
70074-01	1/7/2008	4/3/2008	\$128	\$128	100%		\$128	100%
74439-01	1/28/2008	4/3/2008	\$187	\$187	100%		\$187	100%
75661-01	4/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
75926-01	3/12/2008	4/3/2008	\$167		0%	\$167	\$167	100%
D26323-01	4/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$175	\$175	100%		\$175	100%

70088-01	4/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$213	\$213	100%		\$213	100%
7088F-01	4/3/2008	4/3/2008	\$216	\$216	100%		\$216	100%
73221F-01	2/5/2008	4/4/2008	\$235	\$235	100%		\$235	100%
75658-04	4/4/2008	4/4/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
75713-01	1/28/2008	4/4/2008	\$247	\$247	100%		\$247	100%
55145-02	3/24/2008	4/7/2008	\$292		0%	\$292	\$292	100%
55145F-01	3/24/2008	4/7/2008	\$260		0%	\$260	\$260	100%
75840-03	3/4/2008	4/7/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
75849-02	3/25/2008	4/7/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
75984-01	4/7/2008	4/7/2008	\$74	\$74	100%		\$74	100%
69334V-01	2/4/2008	4/8/2008	\$233	\$233	100%		\$233	100%
71715-01	4/8/2008	4/8/2008	\$191	\$191	100%		\$191	100%
72133-01	2/15/2008	4/8/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
72133F-01	2/15/2008	4/8/2008	\$216		0%	\$216	\$216	100%
72253-01	3/12/2008	4/8/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
74492-02	3/12/2008	4/8/2008	\$117	\$117	100%		\$117	100%
74750-02	4/8/2008	4/8/2008	\$197	\$197	100%		\$197	100%
75990-01	4/8/2008	4/8/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
03000458-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
03000458F-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
03000461-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$216		0%	\$216	\$216	100%
03000461F-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
03000492-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$216		0%	\$216	\$216	100%
03000492F-01	1/11/2008	4/9/2008	\$216		0%	\$216	\$216	100%
71097-01	12/12/2007	4/9/2008	\$163	\$163	100%		\$163	100%
71536-01	1/9/2008	4/9/2008	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
71860-02	1/2/2008	4/9/2008	\$160	\$160	100%		\$160	100%
71860-02	1/2/2008	4/9/2008	\$160	\$160	100%		\$160	100%
75599-01	4/9/2008	4/9/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
043868-01	4/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$235	\$235	100%		\$235	100%
043868V-01	4/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$205	\$205	100%		\$205	100%
70602-01	3/28/2008	4/10/2008	\$177	\$177	100%		\$177	100%
72011-01	3/12/2008	4/10/2008	\$133		0%	\$133	\$133	100%
74503-01	4/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
74580-01	3/11/2008	4/10/2008	\$308	\$308	100%		\$308	100%
74759-01	4/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
71996-01	12/12/2007	4/11/2008	\$210	\$210	100%		\$210	100%
72089-01	3/3/2008	4/11/2008	\$197	\$197	100%		\$197	100%
73056-01	4/2/2008	4/11/2008	\$167		0%	\$167	\$167	100%
73625-01	4/11/2008	4/11/2008	\$197	\$197	100%		\$197	100%
73625V-01	4/11/2008	4/11/2008	\$183	\$183	100%		\$183	100%
76002-01	4/11/2008	4/11/2008	\$154	\$154	100%		\$154	100%
76027-01	4/11/2008	4/11/2008	\$159	\$159	100%		\$159	100%

74380-01	4/14/2008	4/14/2008	\$165	\$165	100%		\$165	100%
74587-03	2/13/2008	4/14/2008	\$167		0%	\$167	\$167	100%
75608-01	4/15/2008	4/15/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
72044-03	1/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$173	\$173	100%		\$173	100%
72158-01	4/16/2008	4/16/2008	\$159	\$159	100%		\$159	100%
74490-01	2/21/2008	4/16/2008	\$164		0%	\$164	\$164	100%
75549-01	4/2/2008	4/16/2008	\$358	\$358	100%		\$358	100%
75549-02	4/2/2008	4/16/2008	\$158	\$158	100%		\$158	100%
75549-03	4/2/2008	4/16/2008	\$158	\$158	100%		\$158	100%
71223-01	3/3/2008	4/17/2008	\$167	\$167	100%		\$167	100%
74749-01	4/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$155	\$155	100%		\$155	100%
75854-01	3/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$312		0%	\$312	\$312	100%
75854-02	3/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$112		0%	\$112	\$112	100%
75854-03	3/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$164		0%	\$164	\$164	100%
74773-01	4/18/2008	4/18/2008	\$157	\$157	100%		\$157	100%
75933-01	3/31/2008	4/18/2008	\$109	\$109	100%		\$109	100%
68648-01	4/21/2008	4/21/2008	\$237	\$237	100%		\$237	100%
68648V-01	4/21/2008	4/21/2008	\$239	\$239	100%		\$239	100%
73538-01	3/16/2008	4/21/2008	\$188	\$188	100%		\$188	100%
75891-01	4/21/2008	4/21/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
03000468-01	3/27/2008	4/22/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
03000468F-01	3/27/2008	4/22/2008	\$187		0%	\$187	\$187	100%
03000519-01	4/10/2008	4/22/2008	\$310		0%	\$310	\$310	100%
03000519F-01	4/10/2008	4/22/2008	\$216		0%	\$216	\$216	100%
03000526-01	4/22/2008	4/22/2008	\$264		0%	\$264	\$264	100%
69745-01	12/27/2007	4/22/2008	\$193		0%	\$193	\$193	100%
74731-01	3/25/2008	4/22/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
68720-01	1/29/2008	4/23/2008	\$253		0%	\$253	\$253	100%
68720V-01	1/29/2008	4/23/2008	\$237		0%	\$237	\$237	100%
69357-01	1/29/2008	4/23/2008	\$168		0%	\$168	\$168	100%
69537V-01	1/29/2008	4/23/2008	\$183		0%	\$183	\$183	100%
72892-01	4/23/2008	4/23/2008	\$264	\$264	100%		\$264	100%
72893-01	4/23/2008	4/23/2008	\$264	\$264	100%		\$264	100%
76029-01	4/23/2008	4/23/2008	\$112	\$112	100%		\$112	100%
72268-01	4/24/2008	4/24/2008	\$231	\$231	100%		\$231	100%
72268V-01	4/24/2008	4/24/2011	\$187	\$187	100%		\$187	100%
74459-01	2/11/2008	4/24/2008	\$137	\$137	100%		\$137	100%
75549F-01	4/3/2008	4/24/2008	\$187	\$187	100%		\$187	100%
74731-02	3/25/2008	4/25/2008	\$197	\$197	100%		\$197	100%
03000540-01	4/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$100	\$100	100%		\$100	100%
70360-01	10/18/2007	4/28/2008	\$205	\$155	76%	\$50	\$205	100%
70986-01	11/13/2008	4/28/2008	\$131	\$131	100%		\$131	100%
72068-02	12/3/2008	4/28/2008	\$95	\$95	100%		\$95	100%

72068-03	12/3/2008	4/28/2008	\$218	\$218	100%		\$218	100%
73073-01	4/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$264	\$264	100%		\$264	100%
74390-01	4/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$153	\$153	100%		\$153	100%
67524-01	4/23/2008	4/29/2008	\$168		0%	\$168	\$168	100%
67524V-01	4/23/2008	4/29/2008	\$183		0%	\$183	\$183	100%
71173-01	1/22/2008	4/29/2008	\$203	\$203	100%		\$203	100%
75585-01	3/7/2008	4/29/2008	\$195		0%	\$195	\$195	100%
75384-02	2/19/2008	4/29/2008	\$112		0%	\$112	\$112	100%
0049251F-01	2/16/2008	4/30/2008	\$200	\$100	50%		\$100	50%
70608-01	3/3/2008	4/2/2008	\$194	\$0	0%		\$0	
70880-01	11/14/2007	4/7/2008	\$172	\$145	84%		\$145	84%
75546-01	2/6/2008	4/6/2008	\$333	\$256	77%		\$256	77%
70814-01	2/11/2008	4/11/2008	\$238	\$150	63%		\$150	63%
03000501-01	11/28/2007	4/28/2007	\$285	\$200	70%	\$50	\$250	88%
72051-01	12/3/2007	3/3/2008	\$188	\$170	90%		\$170	90%
72051-02	12/3/2007	4/3/2008	\$218	\$0	0%		\$0	
035246-01	2/13/2008	4/13/2008	\$306	\$210	69%		\$210	69%
035246-02	2/13/2008	4/13/2008	\$79	\$0	0%		\$0	
74669-01	3/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$337	\$178	53%		\$178	53%
74669-02	3/17/2008	4/17/2008	\$192	\$0	0%		\$0	
74266-01	2/29/2008	4/29/2008	\$383		0%	\$383	\$383	100%
74266F-01	2/29/2008	4/29/2008	\$258		0%	\$258	\$258	100%
03000523-01	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$164	\$0	0%		\$0	
70065V-01	3/6/2008	4/5/2008	\$212	\$25	12%		\$25	12%
73310-01	1/31/2008	4/28/2008	\$288	\$100	35%		\$100	35%
73310-02	1/31/2008	4/28/2008	\$233	\$0	0%		\$0	
73310V-01	1/31/2008	4/28/2008	\$225	\$0	0%		\$0	
0045277-01	2/26/2008	4/26/2008	\$154	\$100	65%		\$100	65%
71086-01	1/22/2008	4/21/2008	\$173	\$103	60%		\$103	60%
71086F-01	1/22/2008	4/21/2008	\$183	\$175	96%		\$175	96%
75764-01	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$337	\$50	15%		\$50	15%
75764-02	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$137	\$0	0%		\$0	
75764-03	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$137	\$0	0%		\$0	
72125-01	1/10/2008	4/21/2008	\$246	\$164	67%		\$164	67%
03000414-01	2/16/2008	4/28/2008	\$385	\$100	26%		\$100	26%
03000414F-01	2/16/2008	4/28/2008	\$258	\$0	0%		\$0	
72186-01	1/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$238	\$168	71%		\$168	71%
71574-01	1/17/2008	4/28/2008	\$335	\$96	29%		\$96	29%
75647-02	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$197	\$50	25%		\$50	25%
03000503A-01	12/13/2007	4/12/2008	\$285	\$80	28%	\$50	\$130	46%
57268-01	2/11/2008	4/4/2008	\$232	\$144	62%		\$144	62%
74147-01	12/3/2007	4/3/2008	\$199	\$100	50%		\$100	50%
74663-01	3/13/2008	4/12/2008	\$337	\$177	53%		\$177	53%

70203-01	12/13/2007	4/12/2008	\$333	\$230	69%		\$230	69%
03000508-01	12/13/2007	4/28/2008	\$285	\$180	63%	\$50	\$230	81%
62567-01	2/16/2008	4/7/2008	\$234	\$160	68%		\$160	68%
75562-02	1/7/2008	4/7/2008	\$133	\$82	62%		\$82	62%
75562-03	1/7/2008	4/7/2008	\$188	\$80	43%		\$80	43%
75735-01	1/9/2008	4/15/2008	\$188	\$64	34%		\$64	34%
69787-01	11/6/2007	4/29/2008	\$343	\$140	41%		\$140	41%
71164-01	3/20/2008	4/28/2008	\$216	\$149	69%		\$149	69%
69865-01	1/10/2008	4/10/2008	\$268	\$174	65%		\$174	65%
70814-02	3/12/2008	4/1/2008	\$433	\$231	53%		\$231	53%
75556-01	3/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$183	\$123	67%		\$123	67%
0049636-02	1/22/2008	4/22/2008	\$389	\$244	63%		\$244	63%
71100V-01	3/31/2008	4/30/2008	\$292	\$225	77%		\$225	77%
71538-01	2/13/2008	4/28/2008	\$240	\$120	50%		\$120	50%
71769-01	3/20/2008	4/28/2008	\$500	\$450	90%		\$450	90%
71769-02	3/20/2008	4/28/2008	\$345	\$300	87%		\$300	87%
71769F-01	3/20/2008	4/28/2008	\$378	\$325	86%		\$325	86%
74150-01	11/28/2007	4/28/2008	\$286	\$250	87%		\$250	87%
74154-01	1/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$309	\$280	91%		\$280	91%
74154-02	1/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$497	\$480	97%		\$480	97%
74154-03	1/28/2008	4/28/2008	\$309	\$300	97%		\$300	97%
75693-01	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$243	\$193	79%	\$50	\$243	100%
75693-02	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$465	\$415	89%	\$50	\$465	100%
75693-03	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$205	\$155	76%	\$50	\$205	100%
75929-01	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$243	\$225	93%		\$225	93%
75929-02	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$193	\$175	91%		\$175	91%
75929-03	3/17/2008	4/16/2008	\$310	\$300	97%		\$300	97%
74147-02	3/12/2008	4/21/2008	\$358	\$250	70%	\$50	\$300	84%
72240-01	12/16/2008	4/18/2008	\$467	\$367	79%	\$50	\$417	89%
75593-02	2/25/2008	4/28/2008	\$353	\$340	96%		\$340	96%
75593-03	2/25/2008	4/28/2008	\$243	\$222	91%		\$222	91%
70218-01	3/12/2008	4/11/2008	\$383	\$225	59%		\$225	59%
70145-03	10/3/2007	4/3/2008	\$213	\$200	94%		\$200	94%
70814-01	2/12/2008	4/1/2008	\$135	\$85	63%	\$50	\$135	100%
70814F-01	2/12/2008	4/1/2008	\$443	\$393	89%	\$50	\$443	100%
69873-01	1/14/2008	4/13/2008	\$266	\$246	92%		\$246	92%
70990-01	2/16/2008	4/1/2008	\$490	\$440	90%	\$50	\$490	100%
69973-01	1/14/2008	4/13/2008	\$296	\$164	55%		\$164	55%

Total Average

62%

84%

**Appendix E: Interview Questions for
Medium and Large Texas Municipal Courts**

Large & Medium Court

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

City of _____

1. When did you implement your Collections Improvement Plan? (Large Courts)
2. Do you have a Collection Improvement Plan? (Medium Courts)
3. What percentage of improvement have you seen since the implementation?
4. What are the three most successful collection practices you have found?
5. What are the three least successful collection practices?
6. Do you have an application for an extension or payment plan?
7. Could you provide a copy of that application to me?
8. What lessons can you share since the implementation of your plan?

**Appendix F: Summary of Responses to
Survey on Court Collections**

Responses by Court

Court Name	Collection Procedures																	
	No. of FT Employees	No. Employees in Collections	Hours per week on Collections	Staff Time			Application				Private				Law Enforce.			
				Dedicated to Collections	Fines Due at Sentencing	Reminders Sent on FTA's	Application Required for Extension	Payment Plan	Def. Info Verified by Staff	Comm. Service Available as Paymt. Option	Monitors Payment Plans	Reminders on Past Due Plans	Sets Show Cause Hearings	Capias Profines Issued	Agency for Delinquent Cases	Denies DL Renewal	Denies Registration	Serves Warrants
Court 1	1	.	.		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 2	112	3	60	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 3	1	.	1		✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Court 4	2	2	8	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 5	1	.	.			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Court 6	2	2	6	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 7	1	.	1	✓	✓				✓								✓	✓
Court 8	2	1	3	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 9	2	2	10			✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 10	2	1	3			✓	✓	✓									✓	
Court 11	3	2	20	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 12	2	.	6	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Court 13	2	1	5		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Court 14	2	.	5	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 15	3	.	6			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 16	2	.	2	✓		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 17	5	2	30		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Court 18	2	.	2		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Court 19	3	2	24			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓

Note: "." indicates question was not answered

**Appendix G: Lockhart Municipal Court Compliance
and Collections Program**

City of Lockhart Municipal Court



COMPIANCE & COLLECTIONS PROGRAM

**Prepared by
Bonnie Townsend, CMCC
Court Administrator**

Introduction

General

The City of Lockhart Municipal Court was created by the Texas Legislature and is a limited jurisdiction Court of Non-Record, handling currently an average of approximately 3,000 traffic, parking, state law, and municipal ordinance violations annually. Misdemeanor cases include violations of the Penal Code such as simple assault, theft < \$50, public intoxication, etc. along with city ordinances such as fire code, zoning, curfew, junked vehicles, etc.. The Court has jurisdiction over fine only (Class “C”) misdemeanor cases occurring within the city limits.

Although higher charges (Class “A” and “B” misdemeanors and felonies) are not filed in Municipal Court, Presiding Judge Jim Gillis is on the magistrate’s rotation in Caldwell County and has magistrate duties once every seven weeks at the Caldwell County Jail.

Municipal Court Vision Statement

Efficient and effective services through the promotion of justice.

Municipal Court Mission Statement

The mission of the Court is to interpret and adjudicate applicable state laws and to support the local community by providing efficient and effective services through the promotion of justice. We seek to serve the citizens of Lockhart in an accountable, efficient, and independent manner. In addition to providing fair and equal access to all citizens of Lockhart, we also strive to facilitate the timely disposition of cases with prompt and courteous service.

Locations and Hours of Operation

1914 West San Antonio Street, Lockhart, Texas 78644

Court Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday

Judge’s Hours: 9:00 a.m. – Noon Monday – Friday

Compliance Opportunity

1. Citations

Quickly filing cases and making options understandable and readily available will enhance compliance:

- a. Paper Citations
 - 1. Redraft to make easier for defendant to read and understand. (Update as needed but at least every 2 years.)
 - 2. Provide Court handout with every citation so defendant will have Court information and options listed.
- b. Citation Entry
 - 1. Citations to be picked up daily from PD.
 - 2. Deputy Clerks will enter citations within 24 hours from PD.
- c. E-Citations (05/03/2011)

2. Make Information Available

Compliance will be more likely if information is readily available and easy to understand.

- a. Translate all Court counter forms and notices into Spanish. (In process)
- b. Internet
 - 1. Court Information
 - 2. Acceptable Fine Schedules
 - 3. Driving Safety Course and Deferred Disposition eligibility requirements and instructions.
 - 4. Online Payments 24/7.
- c. All information listed on E-Citations. (05/03/2011)

3. Encourage early appearance

Compliance will be more likely the quicker a defendant appears to handle his or her case. (10/01/2007)

- a. Tiered fine schedule
 - 1. Standard fine vs. early payment fine.
 - 2. Make early fine lower to encourage compliance.
 - 3. Standard fine assessed after original appearance date set by PD.

4. Signage & Written Reminders

Regular reminders will increase compliance. (10/01/2007)

- a. Signage at the Court reminding customers that court costs, fees, and fines are due at time of sentencing.
- b. Signage at the Court requiring a financial application be filled out for extensions and pay plans. Information is verified at window.
- c. Signage reminding customers that failure to comply will result in a warrant being issued for their arrest.
- d. Warrant notices will be replaced by postcards in a bright color.

5. Phone Calls (Stopped due to position being vacant – 12/2009)

Regular immediate contact with defendants, especially in person when discussions can take place, will improve compliance.

- a. Pre-Warrant phone calls
 - 1. City Marshal gets list of defendants in late notice and contacts as many who have phone numbers and researches phone numbers for those that do not have one listed on citation.
- b. Post-Warrant phone calls
 - 1. City Marshal works closely on warrants less than one year old. Making phone calls and personal contact with these defendants to help increase compliance with Court Orders.
- c. Possibly getting an IVR system or automatic dialer.

6. Locating Defendants

Compliance will be greater if defendants can be contacted on a regular basis if needed.

- a. Ensure “mailable” address when entering citations.
- b. Get contracted with Austin Energy to locate defendants that have service with them.
- c. Possibly get contracted with Texas Workforce Commission also.
- d. Keep good contact with Caldwell County Juvenile Probation Dept. to keep track of juveniles through their records.
- e. Contract with Internet skip search program (Accurint)

7. Time Payment Plans

Immediate full payments are first priority; however, it is in everyone's best interest to work with customers to gain compliance using payment plans.

- a. Due immediately. If not possible, due in full in 30 days.
(Extension granted by Judge with plea & waiver.)
 - 1. Time Payment Fee added on 31st day.
 - 2. Complete financial application.
 - 3. Clerk's verify select information.
- b. If cannot pay in full in 30 days, set up defendant to see Judge for approval of a Payment Plan.
- c. If defendant does not make payments as scheduled set show cause hearing.
- d. Give defendants copy of payment plan and payment coupons for persons to remember their payment dates and amounts.
- e. Have defendant's sign financial admonishment form. (TMCEC form)

8. Issue Warrants

The threat of arrest is a compelling compliance effort and actual arrest is the ultimate compliance effort.

- a. Warrants of Arrest & Capias Pro-fines
 - 1. Warrant postcards will replace warrant letters.
 - 2. Follow up by City Marshal by phone or personal contact.(Vacant)

9. Lockhart City Marshal (Position Vacant – 12/2009)

The ultimate compliance effort is arrest which acts as a deterrent and, if executed, closes cases.

- a. Calls and meets with defendants that have active outstanding warrants in the Municipal Court.
- b. Goes out at least once a week to make personal contact, if not home leaves door hanger at residence.
- c. Serves summons and other Court processes.
- d. Provides security of the Court and is Bailiff of the Court.
- e. Uses contacts with different law enforcement agencies to locate defendants.

10. Special Events

Special events and notices bring attention to the need for voluntary Compliance and assist with closing cases.

- a. State-Wide Annual Warrant Round – Up (highly publicized)
- b. “Click It” or ticket campaign.
- c. Small warrant saturations with prior notice for voluntary compliance.
- d. Deferral Offers

11. “Outside” Collection Efforts

As many collection sources as possible to be used because defendants respond differently to different efforts.

- a. Collection Agency
 - 1. McCreary, Veselka, Bragg, and Allen, P.C. – Send cases That are 1 year old and older, after exhausting all internal efforts.
- b. Report Non-Resident Violators Compact.
- c. Department of Public Safety – FTA program
- d. Denial of Registration program. (SCOFF Law) – (Not in Effect)
- e. Letter of Understanding with Travis County Constable, Pct. 2

12. Purge (administratively close cases)

When collection efforts are exhausted and/or no longer cost effective, Cases should be administratively closed (purged).

- a. Cases over 8 years old.
- b. Special circumstances to be determined by the City Prosecutor.

13. Indigent Defendants

An increasing number of defendants are claiming the inability to pay. It more and more important that the court grant alternative methods of payment to truly indigent people. To achieve this it is important that the court take steps to document the defendant’s indigence.

- a. Have defendants fill out the financial statement and bring documentation with them to court.

- b. Judge reviews documentation and holds indigent hearing.
- c. If indigent, judge offers community service or long term payment plan.
- d. If defendant fails to comply issue capias pro fine.

The City of Lockhart Municipal Court is committed to continuing its implementation of a compliance and collections program. We continually look for innovative ways to increase compliance and, thereby, collections.

Bonnie Townsend, CMCC
Court Administrator
(512) 376-9469
btownsend@lockhart-tx.org

Appendix H: Applications for Extensions/Payment Plans

CAUSE NUMBER: _____

STATE OF TEXAS

IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT

VS.

CITY OF SEGUIN

GUADALUPE COUNTY, TEXAS

TIME PAYMENT PLAN APPLICATION

The Court has made a preliminary determination that I am too poor to pay the fine and costs immediately and I request that the Court grant a time payment plan, or in the alternative, that I be allowed to discharge my obligation by performing community service. The following information is provided in support of my application for a time payment plan.

Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Address: _____

Employer: _____

Employer's Address: _____

Salary: \$ _____ per _____ Employers telephone number: _____

Marital Status (Check One): Married Single Divorced Widowed

Spouse's Name: _____ Spouse's Salary: \$ _____ per _____

Spouse's Employer: _____ Spouse's Job Title _____

List the source and amount of any other income you receive: \$

List all your dependents, their ages, and their relationship to you:

Your residence is (Check One): Rented Owned Rent-Free

LIST ALL BANK ACCOUNTS IN YOUR NAME OR FROM WHICH YOU MAY WITHDRAW FUNDS:

Name of Institution Address of Institution Type of Account Account Balance

APPLICATION FOR TIME PAYMENT, EXTENSION, OR COMMUNITY SERVICE

ESTIMATE YOUR AVERAGE CURRENT MONTHLY EXPENSES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY:

- a. Home mortgage payment, rent, or lot rental for trailer: \$ _____
 - b. Routine home maintenance: \$ _____
 - c. Utilities (electricity, water, gas, telephone): \$ _____
 - d. Food and sundries: \$ _____
 - e. Clothing: \$ _____
 - f. Laundry and cleaning: \$ _____
 - g. Newspapers, periodicals, & books, including school books: \$ _____
 - h. Medical, dental, and drug expenses: \$ _____
 - i. Insurance (auto, life, medical, homeowners/renters): \$ _____
 - j. Transportation, including auto payments: \$ _____
 - k. Taxes not deducted from wages or included in mortgage: \$ _____
 - l. Alimony or support payments: \$ _____
 - m. Religious/charitable contributions: \$ _____
 - n. Other expenses (use reverse side if necessary): \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____
- _____ \$ _____

YOUR INITIAL BY EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THE STATEMENT, UNDERSTAND IT, AND AGREE TO IT.

- _____ I understand that the initial Time Payment Plan that is established as a result of my application and with the Courts approval will resolve only one of my outstanding offenses. At such time as I make the final payment on the initial Time Payment Plan I shall establish a second Time Payment Plan on the second outstanding violation, and will continue to do so until all violations have been resolved.
- _____ I **promise** that until my fines have been paid in full, I will notify this court in person or by first-class mail of any changes of my address or telephone number at the following address, 660 S. Hwy 46, Seguin, TX 78155, within five (5) days of the change.
- _____ **I understand that until my fines and court costs are paid in full I have a continuing obligation to notify the court of any changes in my financial status that may hinder my ability to satisfy the judgment or help me satisfy the judgment.**
- _____ I **understand** that if I pay any part of the fine, costs, or restitution (if applicable) on or after the 31st day after judgment was entered that I am responsible for paying a \$25 time payment fee.
- _____ **I understand that submitting false financial information to the Court constitutes the crime of tampering with a governmental record, punishable by incarceration and/or the imposition of a fine. (Sec. 37.10, Penal Code) I swear that all the information in this application is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

Date: _____

Defendant's Signature: _____

Sworn and subscribed before me this day _____ of _____, 200__.

(Judge) (Clerk) (Deputy Clerk)



CITY OF WACO
MUNICIPAL COURT

**APPLICATION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
FOR PAYMENT OF FINE AND COURT COSTS**

(For Office Use Only)

Cause No. _____ Total Amount Due: \$ _____

Clerk/Cashier _____ Review Date _____

(Please complete all information and please print legibly) (Por favor llene toda información y legible)

NAME: _____ Date of Birth: _____
(NOMBRE): Last (Apellido) First (Nombre) Middle (Segundo Nombre) (Fecha de nacimiento)

DRIVER'S LICENSE # (Nro. de Licencia para conducir): _____ Soc. Sec. #: _____
(No. De Seguro Social)

STREET ADDRESS: _____
(DIRECCION): Street Number and Name (Número y Calle) Apt. (Apto.) City (Ciudad) State (Estado) Zip (Codigo Postal)

PHONE: _____ If no phone, number where you can be Reached and Name _____
(TELEFONO) (Segundo Teléfono y Nombre)

EMPLOYER: _____
(EMPLEO) Name (Nombre) Address (Dirección) City (Ciudad) State (Estado) Zip (Codigo Postal)
Phone # (Teléfono) Position (Posición) Years at Job (Años en el trabajo)

DEFENDANT'S INCOME/EXPENSE INFORMATION (Información de Ingreso/Gastos del Acusado):

Take Home Pay: _____ Bi-weekly: _____ or Monthly: _____
(Neto) (Por Quincena) (o Por Mes)

Name of Bank: _____ Checking Balance \$ _____ Savings Balance \$ _____
(Nombre del Banco) (Cuenta de Cheques) (Balance) (Cuenta de Ahorros) (Balance)

Other Sources of Income: _____ Amount \$ _____
(Otra fuente de Ingreso) Other Jobs \$ _____ S.S. Disability \$ _____ TANF \$ _____ (\$ Cantidad) **TOTAL**

Food Stamps \$ _____ Child Support \$ _____ Retirement \$ _____ Unemployment \$ _____ **INCOME: \$**
Education Grant \$ _____ Utilities Assist. \$ _____ Housing Assist. \$ _____ **(Total de Ingreso)**

Monthly Expenses: Mortgage \$ _____ Rent \$ _____ Utilities \$ _____ Creditors (Acreedores) \$ _____
(Gastos Mensuales) (Hipoteca) (Renta) (Gastos de Vivienda) \$ _____
Food \$ _____ Child Care \$ _____ Phone \$ _____ Other \$ _____ \$ _____
(Alimento) (Cuidado de Niños) (Teléfono) (Otro) \$ _____ **TOTAL**

Car Payment \$ _____ Gasoline \$ _____ Insurance \$ _____ Medical \$ _____ **EXPENSES: \$**
(Pagomensool del Carro) (Gasolina) (Aseguransa) (Gastos Medicos) **(Total de Gastos)**

PERSONAL REFERENCES - Must have 2 (REFERENCIAS PERSONALES - Mínimo 2):

(1) _____
Name and Relationship Street Address Apt. City & State Zip Phone Years Known
(Nombre y Parentesco) (Dirección) (Apto) (Ciudad y Estado) (Codigo Postal) (Teléfono) (Años de Conocerse)

(2) _____
Name and Relationship Street Address Apt. City & State Zip Phone Years Known

I swear or affirm that the above information is true and correct (Juro o afirmo que la información arriba es correcta y la verdad):

Date: _____ Defendant's Signature: _____
(Fecha) (Firma del Acusado):

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Home or Contact Phone Number Verified: YES _____ NO _____ Interviewed by: _____
Employment or Source of Income Verified: YES _____ NO _____ Verified by: _____



Municipal Court
City of Austin, Texas

APPLICATION AND FINANCIAL AFFIDAVIT FOR TIME PAYMENT PLAN

(For Office Use Only)
Cause No. _____ Check in Time _____
Interviewer _____ Review Date _____

NAME _____
Last First Middle Nickname

OTHER NAMES USED (Maiden) _____

Street Address _____
Street Number and Name Apt. City State Zip

Mailing Address _____
P. O. Box or Street Apt. City State Zip

Phone _____ If no phone, number where you can be Reached and Whom _____

Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____

Race _____ Sex _____ Ht _____ Wt _____ Color Eyes _____ Color Hair _____

Date of Birth _____ Drivers Lic. or ID No. _____ Social Security No. _____

____ Married ____ Single ____ Separated ____ Divorced _____ Education (Grade Level Completed)

Spouse's Name _____
Last First Middle Nickname

Spouse's Address & Phone _____
(if different) Street Address City & State Zip Phone Number

Nearest Relative NOT Residing With You _____ Relationship _____

Relative's Address & Phone _____
Street Address City & State Zip Phone Number

List of Names, Addresses & Phone Numbers of Two (2) Personal References NOT Related to You:

Name	Street Address	Apt.	City & State	Zip	Phone	Years Known
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Income/Assets

Employer _____
Name Address Phone Position How Long

Supervisor's Name _____ Your Pay Days _____

Previous Employer _____
Name Address Phone Position From/To

Spouse's Employer _____
Name Address Phone Position How Long

Spouse's Supervisor's Name _____ Spouse's Pay Days _____

Your Monthly Income \$ _____ (Submit Check Stubs)
Your Spouse's Monthly Income/Other Household Income \$ _____ (Submit Check Stubs)
Monthly Income from other Sources Listed Below \$ _____ (Submit Benefits Letter of each)
TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME \$ _____

Please List Sources of Income You Receive and the Amount(s):

Welfare \$ _____ (Monthly) Medicaid \$ _____ (Monthly) Retirement \$ _____ (Monthly)
Disability \$ _____ (Monthly) Soc. Sec. \$ _____ (Monthly) UnempComp. \$ _____ (Monthly)
Child Support \$ _____ (Monthly) Other Income \$ _____ (Monthly) Food Stamps \$ _____ (Monthly)

IF YOU RECEIVE ANY GOVERNMENTAL ASSISTANCE, YOU MUST SUBMIT A COPY OF YOUR AWARD BENEFITS LETTER STATING ALL ASSISTANCE AND AMOUNTS RECEIVED (THIS INCLUDES ANY CHILD SUPPORT ORDER). FOR THIS APPLICATION TO BE REVIEWED, YOU MUST SUBMIT THIS INFORMATION.

Accounts Information (Include all Checking, Savings, Money Market Accounts, Investments, etc.):

_____ Balance \$ _____
Name of Financial Institution Type of Account

_____ Balance \$ _____
Name of Financial Institution Type of Account

TOTAL FINANCIAL ACCOUNT BALANCES \$ _____

Automobiles _____
Year Make Model Year Make Model

Do you own or are you purchasing a Home or own any other Real Estate? _____ Yes _____ No If yes, Where? _____

If Rent, Landlord Information _____
Name Street Address City & State Zip Phone

Do you Live with Parents? _____ Yes _____ No
Other (Please Explain) _____

List Other Persons in Household other than Parent(s) or Child(ren) and Whom _____

Expenses/Liabilities
Monthly Rent or Mortgage Payment \$ _____

Number of Children in Household _____ Age of Each Child _____

Other than yourself or above children, do you have any other dependents you directly support?
____ Yes ____ No If yes, whom and relation _____

If Day Care, Name of Day Care and Expense: _____ \$ _____

Vehicle Loan Balance \$ _____ Monthly Payment \$ _____

Please list all of your Creditors (Credit Card Accounts, Finance Companies, Banks, etc.) Use a separate sheet of Paper if needed.

_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Company Name	Balance	Monthly Payment
_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Company Name	Balance	Monthly Payment
_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Company Name	Balance	Monthly Payment

Are you on probation? ____ Yes ____ No
Probation Officer _____ Phone _____ Monthly probation fee \$ _____

Are you on parole? ____ Yes ____ No
Parole Officer _____ Phone _____ Restitution Payments \$ _____

Are you presently on bond from a jail? ____ Yes ____ No
Name of bonding company _____ County _____ Phone _____

Various Monthly Expenses:

Utilities (electricity, water, gas)	\$ _____
Telephone, cell phone, cable, internet	\$ _____
Food and Sundries	\$ _____
Clothing	\$ _____
Medical, Dental and Drug Expenses	\$ _____
Insurance (auto, life, medical, homeowners/rental)	\$ _____
Alimony or Child Support Payments	\$ _____
Taxes not included in Mortgage	\$ _____
School Books and Expenses	\$ _____
Religious/Charitable Contributions	\$ _____
Other Expenses: (i.e., Layaway, Rent to Own, TV, Appliances, Big Ticket items, etc.)	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ _____

I understand that if I intentionally and knowingly submit false financial information to the Court constitutes the crime of tampering with a governmental record, punishable by incarceration and/or the imposition of a fine (Sec. 37.10, Penal Code).

I promise that until my fines have been paid in full, I will notify this court in person, by telephone, or by first-class mail of any changes of my address or telephone number within five (5) days of the change.

I understand that I have a continuing obligation until my fines are paid in full to notify the court of any changes in my financial status that may hinder my ability to satisfy the judgment or help me satisfy the judgment.

I understand that if I pay any part of the fine or court costs on or after the 31st day after judgment was entered, that I am responsible for paying a \$25.00 Time Payment Fee for each violation.

I affirm that all the information in this application is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief and I have given a complete and accurate disclosure of my income and financial status.

I authorize the City of Austin Municipal Court, employees or agents, to conduct a complete and thorough investigation of any of the above statements. I understand this investigation could include direct verifications of all information given and the obtaining of reports from credit reporting agencies.

I understand that failure to provide all of the information requested will delay my Time Payment Plan application process and I may be ask to complete missing information and be sent back to the waiting area to complete.

I understand and acknowledge that I am hereby formally requesting an Extension of Time for Payment or Community Service of the fines and court costs now due and payable to the City of Austin.

My signature on this document indicates that I have read the document, understand it, and agree to all statements included.

Date

Defendant's Signature

By: _____
Deputy/Court Clerk

City of Austin Municipal Court
P. O. Box 2135
Austin, TX 78768-2135
(512) 974-4800
(512) 974-4611 Time Payment Office

Appendix I: Complete Responses from Court Interviews

Large & Medium Court
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
City of _Bryan, Texas____

1. When did you implement you Collections Improvement Plan? (Large Courts)

2. Do you have a Collection Improvement Plan? (Medium Courts)

Bryan Municipal Court has several tools in place to improve collections of fines but we do not have a formal Collection Improvement Plan at this time that meets the Texas Office of Court Administration collections requirements.

3. What percentage of improvement have you seen since the implementation?

We have seen a 1% improvement from 2009 -2010 compared to 2010 -2011.

4. What are the three most successful collection practices you have found?

I would have to say that for the amount of time and energy that staff has to expend to deal with the cases the following have really helped.

A. Going to e-citations has increased the timeliness of citations being filed and reduced the number of citations being kicked back for corrections.

B. On-line and telephone credit card payment options has increased our payments.

C. Computerized Outbound calls to defendants at different intervals of their citation life cycle and access to pay the citation at the end of the call.

D. City Marshals on board – a good unit with good people skills add the bite to the bark, so to speak.

5. What are the three least successful collection practices?

I would have to say the **OmniBase/DPS FTA program** because for some cases we have to wait too long for results for the return on the investment of time, cost and energy to process cases through, long **term payment**

plans because payment plans do not have the same urgency as payment on demand at the time that the fine is assessed, and leaving **door hangers** at residences.

6. Do you have an application for an extension or payment plan? No, we currently do not have an application for an extension or payment plan. Will be asking Judge to allow clerks' office to implement one though.
7. Could you provide a copy of that application to me? n/a
8. What lessons can you share since the implementation of your plan?

The Judge must buy into the program because the Judge's support makes a difference in how successful each component is.

Large & Medium Court
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
City of Seguin

1. When did you implement your Collections Improvement Plan? (Large Courts)

N/A

2. Do you have a Collection Improvement Plan? (Medium Courts)

The City of Seguin does not have a formal collection plan in place at this time. We have procedures in place that have improved our overall collections.

3. What percentage of improvement have you seen since the implementation?

We saw an 8% improvement from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011

4. What are the three most successful collection practices you have found?

- Community Outreach – we explain to each defendant the importance of staying in contact with us, in case there is a problem or they need extensions, etc. Defendants know that we enter notes every time they make contact with them, which helps the Judge make the decision to lower their payments or allow extensions if needed. This also allows us to maintain current records in case the case goes to warrant and we need to find them.
- Our Judge has standing orders that allow some partial payments or 10 day extensions for a defendant to make the payment depending on the situation – this keeps defendants from having to come to court each time.
- Full-time Warrant Officer makes contact with defendants with outstanding warrants and coordinates with clerks to give defendant a court date and time to come to court instead of going to

jail. This has decreased the number of people in our County Jail and allows people to continue to work, etc. until their court date.

5. What are the three least successful collection practices?

- Collection Agency – the current collection agency does not impact our collections at all.
- Mailing reminders, warrant letters or attaching door hangers has not been successful for us.
- Warrant Round-ups have not worked for us in the past. We do not have a full time Judge and we are required to pay our Judge for any additional appearances.

6. Do you have an application for an extension or payment plan?

Yes

7. Could you provide a copy of that application to me?

Attached

8. What lessons can you share since the implementation of your plan?

The biggest lesson is “be flexible”. I believe this is a constantly changing plan. You have to be willing to adjust to the changing economic times and special situations on an individual basis. Recently, the economy has had a severe impact on the majority of our defendants. The Judge has worked with each defendant to lower payments and extend payment plans as needed. The result has been interesting, we have observed fewer people requesting community service because they can afford the lower payments. It does stretch out the payment plan, but we are collecting more as a result of the flexible options.

Large & Medium Court

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

City of Waco

1. When did you implement your Collections Improvement Plan? (Large Courts)

We began implementation of a self created collection improvement plan in 2003, which was approximately 3 years, before being required by Legislation. This was very helpful to us since this allowed time for us to work through our court processes before having to meet the mandated requirements. We basically had the court processes in place and just had to fine tune these processes and add the mandated requirements. Our Collection Improvement Plan follows OCA guidelines.

2. Do you have a Collection Improvement Plan? (Medium Courts)

3. What percentage of improvement have you seen since the implementation?

When we first began, we started by participating in the Warrant Round-Up. This step improved our revenue since Warrants and Capias Pro Fines had not been enforced with a “task force” type enforcement between the court and the police department. This increased awareness for defendants owing past due fines. The Office of Court Administration Collection Improvement Plan percentages are based upon a 120 day collection rate and our percentage has seemed to drop since 2008 – the economy is a factor but this would be difficult to measure based upon all factors that affect revenue. We also began sending delinquent fines (FTAs and Capias Pro Fines) more than 61 days to a collection agency beginning approximately August, 2011. In the past, we didn’t send delinquent fines until 13 months old so that we could use “in house” collection tools (i.e., put all past due fines through a Warrant Round-Up and 2 to 3 postcard campaigns before sending to the collection agency).

4. What are the three most successful collection practices you have found?

1. The Warrant Round-Up – defendant awareness and accountability.
2. Postcard Campaigns – defendant notification and the defendant knowing we are keeping “tabs” of non payment.
3. Collection Agency

5. What are the three least successful collection practices?

1. Jail Time Credit – defendant waiting for “full jail time credit”.
2. Inconsistent Payment Plans – defendant has behavior to come in and try to negotiate.

3. Making Rules for the Exceptions – (example: giving defendants the extra time they say they need as a delay tactic). Rules need to be consistent, no exceptional circumstances.

6. Do you have an application for an extension or payment plan?

Yes

7. Could you provide a copy of that application to me?

Yes, attached

8. What lessons can you share since the implementation of your plan?

We've made too many changes that confuse staff and customers. Think through your rules and policies and stick with it.

Large & Medium Court
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
City of Austin Municipal Court

1. When did you implement your Collections Improvement Plan? (Large Courts)

Austin started an in-house collections unit in 1999 in conjunction with the court's marshal unit focused on post warrant activities. In 2001, the court began to shift its focus to pre-warrant compliance and telephone contacts along with post warrant contacts and activities. These activities included establishing Time Payment Plans, making pre-warrant phone calls, mailing notices, special telephone campaigns, post-warrant calls, and monthly worksheets which included information on defendants with outstanding warrants to assist officers in making arrests on the street. In 2006, Austin was mandated by the Office of Court Administration to implement a program which follows their developed collection model improvement plan. We continue to make tweaks and changes to our efforts over the years. This allows the court to remain focused and promote what we find works best for our court.

2. Do you have a Collection Improvement Plan? (Medium Courts)

Answer #1 above - large volume court.

3. What percentage of improvement have you seen since the implementation?

It varies from month to month. We have seen some improvement in our efforts as a court. However, we have seen an approx 10% point increase in our collections rate during the first 120 days.

4. What are the three most successful collection practices you have found?
- A. Setting the Expectation. The message the court sends to its customers is powerful (the word on the street). Most people will try to meet the court's expectation.
 - B. Use of an application. The application gathers information needed to establish payment arrangements and more importantly provides follow up information if the customer becomes delinquent. The application may also
 - C. "weed out" individuals who don't need time to pay or who would rather not be bothered in completing an application or providing the information requested.
 - D. Immediate contact by telephone call and/or notice (or postcard). The follow up provides a clear message that the customer was not forgotten, and that compliance is expected by the court. The focus has to be on compliance of the court orders.

5. What are the three least successful collection practices?
- a. Initially assuming a defendant can't pay or comply. It is important to gather some information from the customer before they leave the court.
 - b. Only allowing the customer/defendant to pay in person or pay by cash or money order (cashier check). Providing different payment options (the more the better) can assist the customer in compliance.
 - c. Assuming customers are only motivated by the warrant or by Omnibase only. It is true our customers can be motivated in different ways. It could be the threat of arrest, Omnibase, use of a notice or postcard, or the telephone call. Or, each together may have impact. The effort to do all these items can be time consuming and take effort from staff to be successful.

6. Do you have an application for an extension or payment plan?
- We do. We utilize two different versions. One is a window-courtroom application if they meet the judge's minimum expectation and standing order. The second application is used in our compliance office for customers needing additional time and where payment amounts are less than our judge's minimum order allowed. The customer completes the application which is more in depth and completes an interview with our

compliance officer. The terms and payment amount is approved by the judge and are monitor by the compliance office.

7. Could you provide a copy of that application to me?

Yes. I will email a copy of each application to you .

8. What lessons can you share since the implementation of your plan?

Stay focused on compliance. Normally revenue will take care of itself if compliance is the focus. Monitor your on-going efforts to ensure it is meeting the desired outcomes and expectations. What isn't working can be changed, adjusted, or halted. Don't be afraid to pilot or try new things to enhance the court's effort. If a court was looking to implement a compliance effort or develop a program, first review current efforts and define step by step what you are currently doing. See what is working well and start from there. Sometimes taking things one step at a time can provide helpful information to see what was effective when making changes and in monitoring the impact.

References

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