

# Jemila Lea

Future Indigent Defense Leader of Texas: 2.0 Class Graduate  
Gideon's Promise: Class of 2020 Graduate

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## EDUCATION

**Atlanta's John Marshall Law School (AJMLS)** Atlanta, GA May 2013

*Juris Doctor*

- Excellence in Pro Bono Service, Dean's Award for Pro Bono Challenge

**Texas Woman's University (TWU)** Denton, TX May 2008

*Bachelor of General Studies, G.P.A.: 3.8, magna cum laude*

- Paralegal studies certificate; Business and Government concentration with emphasis in legal studies
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## SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Knowledge of mental health policy with valuable experience in a variety of legal settings
  - Supervising attorney to law school students completing internships with Dallas County Public Defender's Office
  - Over 10 years of experience working in Higher Education in various administrative assistant positions
  - Effective working knowledge of legislative process of Texas Legislature
  - Possesses strong written and verbal communication skills
  - Demonstrated project management with advanced technical knowledge and computer software skills
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## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Assistant Public Defender – Attorney III** Dallas, TX May 2022 – July 2024

*Dallas County Public Defender's Office Backlog/Disposition Misdemeanor Division*

**Assistant Public Defender – Attorney III** Dallas, TX January 2020 – May 2022

*Dallas County Public Defender's Office Misdemeanor Division*

**Assistant Public Defender – Attorney II** Dallas, TX August 2016 – January 2020

*Dallas County Public Defender's Office Misdemeanor Division*

Represent indigent defendants in criminal misdemeanor cases as assigned. Perform case evaluation, preparation, and management; represent clients in pre-trial and evidentiary hearings and jury/court trials; and ensure effective communication with judges, prosecuting attorneys, court personnel, family members, witnesses and other interested parties. Conduct legal research; drafting legal documents; and interpreting laws, rules and regulations.

Evaluates appointed case by: reviewing documentation; conducting necessary legal research on applicable law; interviewing clients, witnesses or persons with knowledge of the case; reviewing and gathering evidence; preparing investigative requests; and determining most appropriate action(s) to be taken. Interviews clients. Discusses facts of case, potential defenses and applicable laws and procedures. Explains legal process to potential witnesses, prepares witnesses for court testimony, and ensures clients are informed on status of case. Drafts, files and responds to necessary motions, briefs, or other legal documents for trial and/or hearing. Gathers, prepares, reviews and presents evidence, exhibits, and related material for trial or hearing. Represents the client in trial and at all applicable hearings by conducting jury selection, presenting opening statements, conducting direct and cross-examinations of witnesses, and presenting closing arguments. Participates in plea-bargain negotiations; prepares necessary legal documents and ensures necessary signatures are secured and documents filed as required. Documents client files, prepares trial notebook, and maintains statistical information regarding caseload and dispositions. Trains and assists in training less experienced misdemeanor public defenders.

**Assistant Public Defender – Attorney II**

Dallas, TX

September 2015 – August 2016

*Dallas County Public Defender's Office Mental Health Division*

- Part-time Assistant Public Defender representing indigent clients in civil mental health cases, including temporary orders of protective custody, extended commitment hearings and forced medication hearings as assigned.
- Perform case evaluation, preparation, and management; represent clients in pre-trial and evidentiary hearings and jury/court trials; and ensure effective communication with judges, prosecuting attorneys, court personnel, family members, witnesses and other interested parties.
- Conduct legal research; drafting legal documents; and interpreting laws, rules and regulations.

**Special Assignment**

Dallas, TX

May 2016 - August 2016

*South Dallas Community Drug Court*

The South Dallas Drug Court is a collaboration between traditional court actors, substance abuse professionals, and mental healthcare professionals in a non-adversarial environment. The Drug Court is designed to handle cases involving substance-abusing offenders with Class C misdemeanors through a combination of accountability and treatment to support and compel substance-abusing offenders to change their lives. Upon successful completion of the program, each participant's (eligible) class C misdemeanor is dismissed.

**Public Policy Fellow - Attorney**

Austin, TX

Aug. 2013 – July 2015

*Hogg Foundation for Mental Health – University of Texas at Austin*

- Recipient of two-year policy fellowship to research, analyze and educate legislators and other stakeholders about effective mental health policies. Track and analyze mental-health legislation.
- Assist in planning and implementing the foundation's policy-related activities and managing policy grants.
- Participate in mental health policy-related meetings of advocates, agency policymakers and other stakeholders, including meetings regarding guardianship reform, housing, child welfare and criminal justice.
- Oversee the management of policy project grants as the lead contact for grantees.
- Research policy issues and draft written products, including reports, analyses, issue briefs and testimony.
- Presentations on mental health related topics at various state conferences such as 20<sup>th</sup> Annual South Texas Family Support Conference, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas 2014 Annual Conference, facilitating a panel discussion at Texas CASA Child Welfare Primer, speaker for State Bar Continuing Legal Education.

**Legal Internship**

McDonough, GA

Sept. 2012 – May 2013

*Office of the Public Defender Flint Judicial Circuit*

- Represented clients in Juvenile Court and Superior Court under Third Year Law Student Practice.
- Explained criminal charges, discussed defense with clients and represented them at Arraignment hearings and Violation of Probation hearings under Third Year Law Student Practice.
- Participated in Mental Health Treatment Accountability Court weekly review team meetings and represented clients at Sanction hearings.

**Legal Internship**

Fort Worth, TX

May 2012 – July 2012

*The Honorable Brent A. Carr - Tarrant County Criminal Court Number 9*

- Observed court proceedings, including diversion program proceedings in the Mental Health Court, Veteran's Court, and Reaching Independence through Successful Empowerment (RISE) program and Family Drug Court; shadowed multiple defense attorneys as they represented clients at hearings and trial dockets; attended training program for lawyers seeking client appointments in the Family Drug Court Diversion Program.
- Performed legal research; shadowed Tarrant County Mental Health Coordinator and probation officer; toured the jail; completed ride along with the Sheriff's Department; and attended meetings with community groups.

**Legal Internship**

Atlanta, GA

Aug. 2011 – Nov. 2011

*U.S. Department of Education - Office for Civil Rights*

- Conducted legal research and analysis; assisted in performing investigative activities related to case evaluation and planning, data analysis, and the development and monitoring of resolution agreements.
- Identified jurisdiction, allegations, issues, legal theories, and data needs; analyzed and interpreted data; ensured case files properly developed and organized; identified appropriate action during monitoring.

**Legal Externship**

Atlanta, GA

May 2011 – July 2011

*Georgia Public Defender Standards Council - Office of the Mental Health Advocate*

- Assisted with monitoring of cases throughout the State of Georgia involving a plea of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI) and representation of a limited number of insanity acquittees.
- Visited various state psychiatric hospitals to interview defendants with staff attorneys to prepare for annual hearings and advocate for clients in Superior Courts all over the state.
- Drafted petitions for release, notice of hearings, production orders, and subpoenas

**Administrative Associate**

Fort Worth, TX

Feb. 2008 – August 2010

*University of North Texas Health Science Center - Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Health*

Provided administrative support to research and education team, and other personnel as requested. Worked closely with research, academic, and clinical faculty and staff of the Psychiatry department. Perform various internal administrative research and academic related functions requiring the understanding of university, JPS Health Network, and departmental/division policies, functions, and programs in areas such as purchasing, travel, research, grants, contracts, and human resources.

- Responsible for managing hardcopy and electronic study files; data collection and management; facilitating preparation of reports and proposals; creating electronic web based surveys and managing data analysis for research studies and internal surveys; coordinating meetings, events and communications between departments at the university and organizations that share similar interests in mental health.
- Provided interim cross coverage for Psychiatry Residency Program and Medical Student Clerkship coordination at Trinity Springs Pavilion, the inpatient psychiatric unit of JPS Health Network. Contributed upper level support in organizing and preparing for Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) site visit of the psychiatry residency training program.

**Various Administrative Assistant Positions**

Dallas, TX

June 1997 – July 2006

*Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) District Office – Administration Building*

Senior Administrative Assistant-Educational Affairs

Sept. 2001 – July 2006

Senior Executive Secretary

Nov. 1999 – Sept. 2001

Executive Secretary I

June 1999 – Nov. 1999

Department Assistant II

June 1997 – June 1999

**Key Accomplishments:**

- After four years of progressive administrative service promoted to Senior Administrative Assistant to the Vice Chancellor of Educational Affairs, the second highest ranked administrator within the largest undergraduate institution in Texas.
- Provided advance administrative assistance to the Rising Star Program, which was designed to eliminate financial need as a barrier to higher education, beginning with pilot program launch in 1997 through 2001. Responsible for total quality management of program database. Developed user friendly database and implemented over 100 user network hub locations. Responsible for facilitating review process of, approximately, 2000 annual program applications. Monitored data entry, performed research, and analyzed results to prepare and distribute summary reports for the program to all interested internal and external parties.
- Developed advanced knowledge regarding Texas legislation relevant to community colleges and higher education, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and other higher education agencies rules and regulations.

**PUBLICATIONS**

- Journal of Dual Diagnosis (May 11, 2011) Are There Racial/Ethnic Differences in Indigent Inner-City Clients with Dual Diagnoses? <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3207211/>
- Texas CASA. (December, 2014). Respecting the Needs of Children and Youth in Texas Foster Care: Acknowledging Trauma and Promoting Positive Mental Health Throughout the System – Recommendations of the Texas CASA Mental Health Task Force. <https://texascasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Texas-CASA-Mental-Health-Task-Force-Report-final-webversion-1.pdf>
- Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. (November, 2014). A guide to understanding mental health systems and services in Texas. [https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/mhguide\\_final-11.pdf](https://hogg.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/mhguide_final-11.pdf)
- Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, Voice for the Defense. (June, 2023). Imposter Syndrome and Being a Public Defender.
- Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association 17<sup>th</sup> Annual DWI Defense: Defending Freedom: Cases with DWI, Prescription Drugs, & Marijuana (May 3, 2024) Motions to Suppress and Challenges in DWI Defense

**SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

- Gideon's Promise The Podcast. I Need a Mentor, And I Need one Now! Panelist (January 27, 2022) <https://www.gideonspromise.org/episode-18-i-need-a-mentor-and-i-need-one-now/>
- Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association 17<sup>th</sup> Annual DWI Defense: Defending Freedom: Cases with DWI, Prescription Drugs, & Marijuana (May 3, 2024) Speaker, Motions to Suppress and Challenges in DWI Defense

**COMMUNITY SERVICE****CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)**

Tarrant County, TX

July 2008 – July 2010