



*ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURTS
Harris County, Texas*

Richard Woods
District Courts Administrator

1201 Franklin, 7th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002
(832) 927-6576

December 14, 2022

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo
& Harris County Commissioners
1001 Preston Street
Houston, Texas 77002

Re: Signed Order Authorizing Appointment of Juvenile Court Masters

Dear County Judge Hidalgo and Commissioners:

Enclosed with this letter is an Order signed by the three Harris County District Court Juvenile Judges re-authorizing the 11 part-time and 4 full time juvenile master positions.

Please know that this Order is *pro forma* and is created based upon the upcoming new term for all three juvenile district court judges. Texas Government Code Section 54.801 provides that the juvenile judges will determine the number of full and part-time masters needed, and will then issue an order setting out that number. That Order is then transmitted to Commissioners Court.

Please also know that this Order is budget neutral: the part-time positions exist *and the budget for the use of the part-time masters remains unchanged*, and the four full time positions allow Judge Davis (appointed by the Juvenile Board as a referee) and the three associate judges to sit as juvenile masters, without additional expense to the County. An individual appointed as a juvenile master under the Government Code, as a referee under the Family Code or as a Juvenile Associate Judge under the Family Code may serve in one or both of the other roles if he or she meets the qualifications for that role and if properly appointed under the applicable law. *See* Tex. Govt Code §54.820, and Tex. Fam. Code §§51.04(g) & 201.309.

This Order allows the Harris County District Court Juvenile Judges to appoint Judge Samantha Davis (the full-time referee) or their individual master / associate judge as a full-time juvenile master.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Woods". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Woods" clearly distinguishable.

Richard Woods,
District Courts Administrator

cc: Judge Latosha Lewis Payne, LADJ
Michell Moore, Administrative Judge, Juvenile Division
Daniel Ramos, OMB Executive Director
Gayatri Garg, OMB Performance Analysis Director
Jay Aiyer, First Assistant County Attorney

Attachment: Harris County District Court Juvenile Judges' Order Re-Authorizing Positions
for Juvenile Masters



313TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
314TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
315TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OF
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

ORDER AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF
JUVENILE COURT MASTERS

There are three district courts specifically designated as juvenile courts for Harris County, Texas (the "Harris County Juvenile Courts"). The Harris County Juvenile Courts are the 313th Court, the 314th Court and the 315th Court. Currently in place are 4 full time and 11 part time positions to assist the courts.

On December 13, 2022, a majority of the judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts reviewed and considered the number of full time and part time masters needed to serve their courts. Pursuant to Tex. Govt Code §54.801, a majority of the judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts have determined that a total of up to 4 full time juvenile court masters and up to 11 part time juvenile court masters are needed.

Each individual appointed would meet the qualifications required by Section 54.802 of the Texas Government Code.

These appointments are in addition to and not in lieu of any individual appointments made under Chapter 201 of the Texas Family Code for full time associate judges or by the Juvenile Board under Chapters 51 and 54 of the Texas Family Code for referees. The judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts note that the appointment of the full-time juvenile masters is budget neutral and are appointments which allow: (i) the full-time referee appointed by the Juvenile Board to also serve as a juvenile master, as authorized by Tex. Govt Code §54.820(b); and (ii) the full-time associate judge or judges

appointed by the individual courts, to also serve as a juvenile master, as authorized by Tex. Fam. Code §201.309 and Tex. Govt Code §54.820(b).

Pursuant to Section 54.801 of the Texas Government Code, the judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts request that the Commissioners Court of Harris County, Texas re-approve the juvenile master positions for a total of up to 4 full time juvenile court masters and up to 11 part time juvenile court masters.

The judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts order that the appointments and re-appointments of the juvenile court masters be effective immediately upon the signing of those appointment or re-appointment orders.

By agreement of the undersigned members of the judges of the Harris County Juvenile Courts.

December 13, 2022
Date signed

Natalia Oakes
Natalia Oakes
Judge, 313th District Court

Leah Shapiro
Leah Shapiro
Judge, 315th District Court

Michelle Moore
Michelle Moore
Judge, 314th District Court
Administrative Judge of the
Harris County Juvenile Courts