

# TEXAS COURT CLERKS ASSOCIATION

## Education Committee Policies and Procedures

Effective January 2025



### **Mission Statement**

*To provide members with a source of quality judicial education essential to establishing the highest level of professional standards and maintaining public confidence.*

### **History and Background**

Prior to the implementation of the Municipal Court Clerk Certification Program there were few career development programs to educate municipal court employees for their work in the court. The clerk training programs available, while offering continuing legal education, did not offer a sequenced, systematic curriculum. The program was built on existing resources, networks, and organizations. The Texas Court Clerks Association (TCCA), the Texas Municipal Courts Association (TMCA), and the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC), funded by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, continue to provide continuing legal education to clerks each year. Together, they aspire to provide a professional development program for all municipal court clerks, while improving the operations of the courts.

On April 26, 1995, members of the TCCA Certification and Educational Programs Committee (hereinafter referred to as the committee) and representatives from TMCEC met to take initial steps to create the Municipal Court Clerk Certification Program. The TCCA Education Committee reviewed various alternatives before moving forward with the present certification

program.

The Education Committee reviewed certification models from other associations, including the Texas Society of Association Executives, the Texas City Secretaries, and human resource certification programs.

Funding was secured through a State Justice Institute grant for a qualified consultant to identify exemplary certification programs, attend existing seminars for court clerks, conduct focus groups and interviews, and develop examinations based off the data collected. Through this grant and additional funds, the certification program took form. Study guides and exams were developed. The program was evaluated and received high marks. In 1997, at the close of the grant period, TCCA and TMCEC assumed all responsibility for continuing to operate the program.

The program continues to thrive, thanks to the hard work of those involved with the program since its inception, including a joint endeavor with Texas State University who began supporting the program in 2003.

The committee will maintain two documents. One for historical purposes: *Certification Program Handbook*, which excludes rules and *Policies and Procedures*, which contains rules, procedures and policies. The Policies and Procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

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## **I. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A. Texas Court Clerks Association (TCCA)**

In collaboration with our partners, TCCA sponsors the Clerk Certification program, including, but not limited to maintaining the certification program through providing facilitators for preparation courses, providing proctors for exams, issuing certificates, and receiving exam fees.

#### **1. Committee Roles and Responsibilities**

- a. Provide Level 1 and Level 2 prep sessions and trained facilitators;
- b. Provide exam sites and approved proctors;
- c. Coordinate education programs provided by regions across the state;
- d. Review certification materials developed by TMCEC;

- e. Present achievement awards for each clerk achieving Level III (CMCC) status;
- 2. Committee Chairs

The TCCA President will appoint an Education Committee Chair in accordance with the Bylaws of the association.

  - a. TCCA President will appoint the chair at the annual Post-Conference Board Meeting.
  - b. TCCA President, or their designee, will serve as Co-Chair of the committee.
  - c. The members of the committee will be appointed by the committee chairs in accordance with the Bylaws.
  - d. Members may serve if they are in good standing and fit the qualifications of Bylaws.
  - e. Chairs will entertain applications, as needed, for open committee positions.
- 3. Certification Program Financial Manager

The TCCA President will appoint Certification Program Financial Manager in accordance with the Bylaws of the association.

  - a. The Financial Manager shall collect, receive and have custody of all funds derived by and from the Court Clerks Certification program.
  - b. The Financial Manager shall deposit all funds in a bank designated by the Board of Directors and shall provide for expenditure of such funds.
  - c. The Financial Manager shall perform all other duties required of a Treasurer as outlined by TCCA Bylaws.
  - d. The Financial Manager shall be an *ex officio* member of the TCCA Board.

## **II. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **A. TCCA Annual Conference**

- 1. The conference standard is no less than 20 hours of qualified education offered during each annual conference; to include opening and closing ceremonies, exhibitors, and the annual business meeting.
- 2. The committee will verify that each conference participant attends the conference in its entirety. No partial credit will be issued, unless submitted under the partial credit policy (See II. K).
- 3. The committee is responsible for developing, reviewing and approving educational topics and presenters for the annual conference.
- 4. The committee will budget an amount to be reviewed and approved

annually to support conference expenses related to providing quality speakers or educational sessions.

5. The committee is responsible for additional recognition of those who have achieved Level III certification.

## **B. Education Committee Hosted Training**

### **1. Responsibilities**

- a. The committee will host a minimum of eight hours of in-person or virtual continuing education in each region on an annual basis.
- b. The Regional Director and/or Assistant Regional Director should assist the committee in coordinating training dates and locations for their regions. If unable to assist, the committee will coordinate.
- c. The committee will consider the TMCEC calendar and agenda for the *Regional Clerks Seminar* each AY when determining training dates and topics.
- d. Training dates should be selected outside of the month in which TMCEC is hosting in each region, if possible.
- e. Training topics should be selected to complement the current TMCEC agenda, not replace it.

### **2. Fees**

- a. To register and attend regional education events presented by the committee, the same fees apply as all other TCCA education events.
- b. Failure to attend without timely cancelation will result in a “no-show” fee for all registrants (refer to “*No-Show Fee Policy.*”)

### **3. Expenses**

- a. All expenses related to region training hosted by the committee will be budgeted and tracked as a dedicated expense group.
- b. To reduce costs as much as possible, the committee will leverage partnerships/resources available within each region whenever possible. All expenses incurred will be the responsibility of the Education Program budget.
- c. Related expenses may include:
  - Training facility rental;
  - Travel, lodging, and meals for assigned committee members;
  - Training day lunch meal for participants;
  - Printed materials; and/or
  - Supplies required to facilitate training.

## **C. Region Hosted Training**

1. **Region Application Process**

All Regions are required to follow the Region application process available on the Education page of the TCCA website; including, but not limited to the following:

- a. Regions are approved to request education through TCCA.
- b. All Regional Directors will appoint an Assistant Regional Director to serve as education chair, responsible for requesting education at a Region level.
- c. All Region education will be requested at a minimum of 60 days in advance of the proposed training date.
- d. No Region shall advertise nor post education as approved or pending approval for certification hours unless and until receiving approval from the Committee.
- e. All non-member registrants shall be charged a \$50 fee to attend an educational event.

**D. Virtual “Live” Training**

1. All virtual training will be facilitated through the TCCA Zoom profile.
2. Training shall be attended from a device larger than a smart phone
3. In addition to the facilitator, all trainings shall have a designated “moderator” to assist with administrative responsibilities:
  - a. Moderator is identified when requesting virtual education or identified at the beginning of the session.
  - b. Moderators shall observe participants to guarantee participation, answer questions submitted through the chat function and assist the facilitator with any other requests to enable successful flow.
  - c. If the moderator recognizes issues, they will first send a “private chat” directly to the participant requesting correction. If a problem persists, the moderator shall notify the facilitator for direction.
4. Participants are expected to be visible and audible (when not appropriately muted) throughout the duration of the presentation.
5. Participants will be appropriately dressed and must recognize this is a work environment.
6. Participants shall fully engage by giving their undivided attention to the facilitator throughout the duration of the presentation (without multi-tasking).
7. Participants should prepare ahead of time by confirming a ZOOM account, testing its ability to function properly and downloading any necessary documents.
8. Participants should log in to the presentation no later than 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time to mitigate any potential IT issues. Facilitators will NOT be available to troubleshoot technical

- issues on the day of the presentation.
9. Education credit will be issued based on the attendance list maintained and submitted by the facilitator or moderator. Facilitator or Moderator is expected to complete roll calls at the beginning of each new session.
  10. All training shall be conducted in a “live” setting. Pre-recorded sessions will not be considered for educational credit.
  11. Pre-registration is required. Failure to do so will result in the facilitator requesting you to leave and no educational credit will be issued.
  12. To save meeting bandwidth and prevent a service interruption as much as possible, participants shall not use virtual backgrounds while participating.

#### **E. “No Show” Policy for Educational Events**

1. Timely Cancellation Required
  - a. To ensure an opportunity for others to register, anyone unable to attend an educational event after registering must cancel their registration no later than three days prior to the event.
  - b. Cancellation should be completed by the registrant through the events page of the TCCA website.
2. Failure to Attend Educational Event

Any registrant who fails to attend their registered event and who fails to timely cancel their event registration will be subject to a “no-show” fee.
3. Fee

A “no-show” fee of \$25 will be invoiced to the registrant following the failure to appear for the event.
4. Future Registration Hold

Failure to satisfy an outstanding “no-show” invoice will result with the inability to attend future events or receive future educational credit through TCCA.
5. Failure to Attend Due to an Emergency Circumstance
  - a. Failure to attend due to an emergency circumstance will only be considered through written requests submitted by the person invoiced for committee review and vote.
  - b. If approved by the committee, the “no-show” invoice shall be voided.

#### **F. Non-Member Attendance to TCCA Educational Events**

1. Non-members may attend TCCA educational events upon payment of a “non-member education fee.”



- a. An additional “non-member education fee” for the TCCA Annual Conference shall be \$100.
- b. The “non-member education fee” for all other TCCA educational events shall be \$50.

**G.**

**Test Prep Sessions**

**1. Scheduling**

- a. Test prep sessions will be scheduled as requested by individual regions or education committees and approved by the committee. A request to hold test prep sessions at the annual conference will be submitted by the committee.

**2. Prep Session Facilitators**

- a. The committee will be responsible for training Prep Session facilitators.
- b. The committee will maintain a list of trained facilitators, updated annually to ensure that each session approved for credit is led by a trained facilitator.
- c. All facilitators must have completed the training program and remain a member in good standing, and,
  - a. Attend a facilitators training course;
  - b. Observe at least 1 prep session at the level they are planning to facilitate.
- d. All facilitators must be certified at or above the level they are facilitating.
- e. TCCA will pay for reasonable expenses in accordance with TCCA travel reimbursement policies. Efforts will be made to assign facilitators in local areas whenever possible.
- f. Facilitators may request 3 hours teaching credit for every hour they facilitate. This request must be submitted to the Education Chair, who will verify and issue certificates.
- g. Facilitators must complete an annual Ethics Agreement and Speaker’s Agreement prior to facilitating in a calendar year.
- h. Facilitators agree not to release facilitator materials to anyone other than an approved facilitator.
- i. No credit hours will be awarded for a session conducted without approval, and/or without an approved facilitator.
- j. An exhibitor cannot facilitate an educational session for certification credit unless approved by “The Committee.” Educational credit is not given if a facilitator will be promoting their product or service.

**3. Materials**

- a. the committee will update and distribute the prep course

- materials, including “Practice Test” and “Facilitator Guide”. Copies of materials will be made available to all participants prior to the session.
- b. The facilitator is responsible for developing auxiliary materials and providing what is necessary for participants.
- 4. Clerk Guides
  - a. Clerk Guides and Level III Study Questions developed by TMCEC will be used as base materials for the Prep Sessions. Each individual facilitator selects formats for presenting the materials.
- 5. Credit Hours
  - a. Level 1 prep sessions will be approved for 5 hours of education credit divided into increments, based on certification test parts (A – 2 hours, B – 2 hours, C – 1 hour).
  - b. Level 2 prep sessions will be approved for up to 6 hours of education credit, divided into 2-hour increments, based on certification test parts (A – 2 hours, B – 2 hours, C – 2 hour).
  - c. Participants may attend one, two or all three parts of the session and will be given credit only for the portions they attend.
  - d. Participants will not be allowed credit for attending a prep session for an exam they have already passed and that has not expired.
  - e. Participants may attend a prep session a second time if they are unsuccessful on the examination and credit will be given for those hours.
  - f. Participants must be certified at Level I and in good standing to attend Level II prep sessions.

### **III. CLERK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

#### **A. Certification Recognition**

- a. The committee will issue certificates for Levels I & II of certification accompanied by a letter from the TCCA President.
- b. The committee will:
  - a. Notify the TCCA Board and Education Committee of each new clerk achieving Level III.
  - b. Post an announcement on the TCCA Facebook page and TCCA website for TCCA members.
  - c. Order the plaque certificate and send to the individual who will be presenting the plaque.
  - d. Send a letter of congratulations signed by the

- TCCA President along with a press release template (provided by TMCEC).
- e. Send a letter to the clerk's city manager notifying them of the clerk's accomplishment. A copy of the letter will be sent to the clerk for their records.

## **B. Level III Course of Study and Requirements**

1. TMCEC will maintain a Level III Course of Study and Requirements page to be reviewed annually by TCCA Education Committee.

## **C. Examinations**

1. Exam Sites
  - a. To arrange a testing site for the Clerk Certification Exam, the following steps must be followed:
    - a. Complete Online Application which is submitted to the committee chair or their appointee for an exam proctor and exam date.
    - b. The exam site host will provide a proposed exam site, and a contact name/phone number to the committee chair or their appointee at the time of application.
    - c. Two sites/per year/per Region will be funded by the committee. Any additional requested sites will be the financial responsibility of the Region.
    - d. TMCEC Regional events and any other sites identified by TMCEC will be considered exam sites. The Education Committee Chair will be responsible for submitting those sites for registration on the TCCA website.
  - b. In-office testing may be requested by submitting a "Alternative Testing Consideration Request" form, available on the TCCA website.
    - a. Each form will be submitted for individual consideration and review by the Education Committee.
    - b. Upon approval, the Education Committee will determine the proctor/location and date of the testing (within 30 days of the approval).
2. Exam Proctors
  - a. Proctors include TMCEC staff and selected Level III Certified Clerks in good standing. Proctors are selected and approved by the Committee. They must be members of the Education Committee or TCCA board upon appointment.
  - b. The committee will be responsible for developing and distributing guidelines for proctoring certification

- exams.
- c. New proctors will be trained by an experienced proctor. Training must include observation of at least one testing site.
- d. TCCA pays the approved proctor \$100 per exam site. A reimbursement request form must be completed and returned to the Certification Program Financial Manager within thirty days to receive the payment. In addition to the proctor fee, proctors are reimbursed for hotels, meals, and mileage according to the TCCA financial policies.
- e. A proctor may not facilitate an exam at the same site where an employee, co-worker, or relative of the proctor is taking the exam, without first obtaining a waiver from the committee.
- f. Proctors will be required to sign a proctor's ethics agreement annually.

#### **D. Partial Certification Credit**

1. Partial certification credit for education attended in-person or in a "live" webinar setting will not be awarded except in situations created by emergency circumstances.
2. "Emergency circumstances" are defined as one of the following:
  - a. A medical emergency – an acute injury or illness or serious mental health issue that poses an immediate risk to a person's life or long-term health, that occurs to the attendee or a member of their immediate family, or the death of an immediate family member.
  - b. A work emergency – a requirement by the attendee's employer to return to work immediately.
  - c. A personal emergency – a car accident or similar accident involving the attendee or a member of their immediate family; or the impending threat of physical damage to the attendee's home.
3. "Immediate family members" include:
  - a. Spouse or significant other.
  - b. Parents.
  - c. Grandparents.
  - d. Children (biological, adopted, half- and step-).
  - e. Grandchildren.
  - f. Siblings; and
  - g. In-laws.
4. In situations created by emergency circumstances, attendees must submit a written request to the Education Committee for individual review and consideration of partial education credit for partial attendance.
5. Perfected requests shall include the following to be considered:

- a. Attendee's name;
  - b. Attendee's title;
  - c. Attendee's employer;
  - d. Attendee's contact information;
    - Mailing address
    - Telephone number
    - E-mail address
  - e. Course title of education;
  - f. Date of education;
  - g. Location of education;
  - h. Explanation of why partial credit is being requested;
  - i. Number of full credit hours of education offered;
  - j. Number of partial credit hours requested; and
  - k. Documentation supporting explanation.
6. Perfected requests for review must be submitted to the TCCA Education Chairperson by mail or email no later than 30 days after the date of the missed education. Requests that are not submitted by the deadline will not be considered and only requests made for partially attended education in the current academic year will be considered.
  7. For documented medical emergencies, a certified physician's form shall be submitted to support the request.
  8. Upon review by the Education Committee, the Chairperson shall notify the attendee in writing of the Committee's decision no later than 14 days after the Spring Meeting.
  9. No refunds or partial monetary credit will be given for anyone who fails to attend the full amount of education, regardless of circumstances.

#### **E. Maintaining Certification, Not Employed by Court**

TCCA will publish a statement on the official website advising clerks no longer employed by a court will not receive renewal reminders.

### **IV. MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **A. Outstanding Achievement in Education Award**

Each year, during the annual conference, the committee may recognize a person(s) as having demonstrated outstanding achievement in education through development of a program/curriculum, task performed and/or involvement or action providing outstanding education that benefits the entire membership.

This award may, but is not required to, be awarded annually. The participant may receive this award more than one time.

#### **B. Emergency Declaration Policies**

In the event of an Emergency Declaration by the Governor of the State of Texas for the State and/or counties therein the Texas Court Clerks Association, through the Education Committee has the right to make “emergency” adjustments to the Policies and Procedures of “The Committee.”

Any Emergency Declaration Policies adopted will be distributed to membership through email and available on the TCCA website.

**C. Posting of Policies and Procedures**

The Education Committee policy and procedures will be reviewed by the committee on an annual basis. The policies and procedures will be posted on the TCCA website and updated annually.