

Kim K. Ogg
Harris County District Attorney



COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Technology

**A Policy/Program Plan Based On
2017 Community Impact Transition Committee Recommendations.**

Committee Members:

Josh Verde, Chair

Theodis Butler

Pablo Ormachea

Jeff Reichman

Chris Reid, HCDAO

Gary Zallar, HCDAO

Since taking office, Kim Ogg and the new Administration at the Harris County District Attorney's Office (HCDAO) have been guided by a core set of principles that have shaped policy change and resulted in the implementation of new program initiatives. Because difficult decisions arise every day during the administration of justice, the District Attorney and her staff rely upon these principles in seeking fair and equal justice for the people of Harris County. These guiding principles can be found on the HCDAO website under "The Office" tab.

Overview

Science and technology have dramatically changed the landscape of the criminal justice system, and the Ogg Administration welcomes the opportunities and advantages they bring to the pursuit of truth and fairness in prosecution and public safety. These guiding principles apply to determining best practices in the application of new technologies:

- **To use taxpayer money efficiently;**
- **To collaborate with other governmental and law enforcement agencies so that we can solve and prosecute crimes more effectively;**
- **To utilize technology to improve case management, service to our constituents, and employee accountability; and**
- **To be mindful of our duty to see that justice is done, and as representatives of the people, to be transparent in our actions.**

The cost benefits of every technological advancement available to the HCDAO must be weighed against the risks to individual and organizational privacy, and the search for improved efficiency in the criminal justice system must be ongoing. The future will only bring greater advancement in these areas, and the HCDAO is dedicated to capitalizing on the opportunity to advance criminal justice reform more rapidly through the application of new technology in many areas of prosecution. Improvement goals include saving taxpayer money, increased collaboration with other agencies, better constituent service, and employee accountability, and greater transparency to the public.

Action

Public Access to Data

Transparency is a core element of the Ogg Administration's aim to increase public trust in the local Harris County justice system. To that end:

- HCDAO launched a new website that is more user-friendly and easy to navigate than earlier iterations under previous administrations. The new website also has infrastructure bandwidth to publish more data.
- The new website now has improved functionality on mobile platforms.
- Social media platforms for the HCDAI are now integrated into the website.
- Automating Public Information Act and Speaker requests are benchmarks in progressing towards the ultimate goal of getting people information they need.
- HCDAO now employs a dedicated Data Analysis/Program Assessment officer, Elizabeth Eakin, to curate data. Elizabeth Eakin works with academic and dedicated research institutes to collect data and apply an academic level analysis.
- HCDAO IT Director, Gary Zallar, is investigating prospective future collaborations or utilization of outside data platforms.

Technology Improvements in the Courtroom

To keep the wheels of justice turning, implementation of new technologies must be functional before being adopted. Additionally, public policy adjustments may be necessary when attempting to adapt new technology into the existing technologically archaic criminal justice system. DA Ogg and her leadership staff actively work toward collaboration with law enforcement agencies and other Harris County departments so that the process of justice remains undisturbed during transition periods. A combination of policy changes and technology initiatives that the HCDAO supports would address these issues:

- Reducing number and size of District and County Criminal Court at Law dockets;
- Streamlining data sharing internally and externally; and
- Automation that helps maintain quality while improving efficiency.

Data Management and Storage

One of the most pressing technological needs is digital storage. DA Ogg has identified this as a fiscal priority for the HCDAO. Additionally, the new Administration supports:

- Standardizing record keeping among local law enforcement agencies that file with HCDAO;
- Cost-effective and secure data storage choices that reflect a healthy balance between financial and substantive responsibilities;
- A seamless blend of old legacy technology with new technology;
- Information system collaboration and configuration between and among all stakeholders in the criminal justice system which save resources and improve efficiency.

Surveys

The use of surveys is under consideration as a method to improve the usability of systems. The administrative leadership team is receptive to suggestions on technology improvements.

The Harris County District Attorney's Office and DA Kim Ogg are dedicated to continued community involvement in the criminal justice system and the application of fair and equal justice to all of Harris County. We would like to thank all the participants of Transition Team for their time and dedication to improving our criminal justice system. The communities voice will always be part of the Ogg administration.

The Harris County District Attorney's Office is comprised of 329 prosecutors, 90 investigators and 277 support personnel who are dedicated to making our community safer through evidence-based prosecution. This means guaranteeing a fair process with the goal of obtaining a just result for the victim, the accused and the community in every case.

To accomplish these goals, we promise:

- *To use taxpayer money efficiently;*
- *To make decisions about criminal cases based on evidence, not relationships;*
- *To strive for equality in our use of prosecutorial discretion;*
- *To treat all crime victims with dignity and fairness;*
- *To also treat those accused of criminal offenses with dignity and fairness;*
- *To recognize mental illness as a public-health concern;*
- *To collaborate with other governmental and law enforcement agencies so that we can solve and prosecute crimes more effectively;*
- *To utilize the expertise of specialty division prosecutors for crimes requiring subject matter knowledge;*
- *To actively seek input and participation by the diverse communities of the greater Houston area;*
- *To utilize technology to improve case management, service to our constituents, and employee accountability;*
- *To be mindful of our duty to see that justice is done, and as representatives of the people, to be transparent in our actions;*
- *To act with professionalism in every situation.*