BOARD DIRECTIVE

SUBJECT: **VIDEOCONFERENCING**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this directive is to ensure statewide uniformity in the utilization of videoconferencing in the board and central office.

AUTHORITY: Texas Government Code Sections 508.0362, 508.041, 508.042, 551.080 and 660.147; Texas Administrative Code Title 37, Part V, Section Sections 141.91 and 141.92

DEFINITIONS: Designated Headquarters - the area within the city limits of the incorporated area in which an employee's place of employment is located, if the place of employment is located within an unincorporated area, the area within a five (5) mile radius of the place of employment is the designated headquarters.

Lead Voter – the member of the parole panel or member of the Board who is designated to cast the first vote in the parole review process.

Unit of Assignment – the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Correctional Institutions Division unit where the offender is located.

Training Coordinator – a staff member designated by the Presiding Officer who is responsible for coordinating statutorily required training programs.

Videoconferencing Coordinator – a staff member designated by the Board Member or Board Administrator who is responsible for coordinating the videoconference.

DISCUSSION: Government Code Section 660.147, Training Seminars, requires each state agency to use interactive television videoconference technology, and telephone conferences to the greatest extent possible. It prohibits an agency from reimbursing a state employee for a travel expense associated with a training seminar conducted by the agency for its employee unless

the chief administrator of the agency or the administrator's designee certifies in the supporting documentation that the agency:

1. does not possess interactive television or video conference facilities at the designated headquarters of the employees attending the seminar;

2. cannot purchase or lease such facilities at a cost less than the total travel expenses associated with the seminar; and

3. does not have access to another agency's facilities at the same location.

All other events and activities authorized to be conducted by videoconferencing are outlined in this directive.

PROCEDURES:

I. Training – The Board is required, by statute, to train Board Members, parole commissioners and designated agents who are responsible for conducting hearings for offenders who are in the revocation process.

   A. Board Members and Parole Commissioners - A Board Member who is appointed to and qualifies for office as a member of the board, and parole commissioners who are hired by the Presiding Officer and employed by the Board may not vote or deliberate on a matter described in Government Code Section 508.0441 until the person completes at least one course of a training program that complies with Government Code Section 508.0362.

   B. Board Designees – Newly hired employees of the board designated to conduct hearings pursuant to Government Code Section 508.281 must complete a training program before conducting a hearing without the assistance of a Board Member or experienced parole commissioner or designee. In addition, the statute requires an annual training program for all board designees.

   C. The Presiding Officer will designate a Training Coordinator for the statutorily required training programs. The Training Coordinator will prepare and submit a training program proposal to the Presiding Officer for approval. The Presiding Officer will approve the training program and make the final decision as to whether the training program or portions of the training program will be conducted by videoconferencing.

II. Conferences – All travel requests to attend conferences must be approved, in advance, by the Presiding Officer in accordance with Board Directive 04-02.04. The Board Member or employee will submit a Decision Memorandum to the Presiding Officer. The Decision Memorandum will include whether videoconferencing attendance is available.

III.   Other Board Activities - When the Lead Voter determines it is appropriate to conduct an offender interview on the offender's unit of assignment (unit), the Lead Voter or their designee is responsible for scheduling the interview. The Lead Voter is expected to travel to the unit to conduct the interview. However, there are limited circumstances where the interview may be conducted by videoconferencing.

A.   The Lead Voter or designee will schedule and conduct an in-person interview at the unit when the unit is located less than 100 miles from the Lead Voter's designated headquarters.

B.   For units located more than 100 miles from the Lead Voter's designated headquarters, the Lead Voter has the discretion to schedule the interview by videoconferencing. The Lead Voter will document videoconference interviews separate from unit interviews when reporting monthly activities.

C.   All interviews utilizing videoconferencing equipment should be authorized by the Board Member in each Board Office.

IV.   Scheduling the Videoconference – The designated video teleconference Coordinator (Coordinator) shall utilize the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's (TDCJ) Current Videoconference Guidelines to schedule the video conference.

A.   As required by the TDCJ's Current Videoconference Guidelines, the Coordinator shall schedule the videoconference 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting. A shorter notice is acceptable in emergency situations.

B.   For offender interviews, the Coordinator shall schedule the videoconference three workdays prior to the scheduled interview. Prior to scheduling the interview, the Coordinator will contact the Institutional Parole Office (IPO) Regional Supervisor responsible for the unit where the interview is scheduled to be conducted to determine the availability of the IPO assigned to the unit.

SIGNED THIS, THE 11^h DAY OF JULY, 2014.

RISSIE OWENS, PRESIDING OFFICER (CHAIR)

* Signature on file.