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New Video Series Aids Texas Youth Charged with Class C Misdemeanors *Justice of the Peace judge appears in video to offer guidance, background*

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas youth who are charged with a Class C Misdemeanor now have a new tool to help them understand the court process and how to defend themselves in a justice of the peace (JP) or municipal court.

Two nonprofits, Texas Appleseed and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA), have joined to produce this new, free video series called Youth In Court. The content is focused on the rights of children who have been charged with a Class C misdemeanor for a school-based criminal offense.

The videos, online at www.TexasAppleseed.net and www.trla.org/youthrights, are based on TRLA's previously published handbooks for parents and children. They include high-level information regarding school-based ticketing and reflect the most recent changes from Texas' last legislative session (83rd).

"Students often actually have a defense, and need to understand their rights," said Karla M. Vargas, staff attorney at Texas Appleseed. "They may have truancy issues because of major life issues, such as chronic illness, a disability, being a victim of bullying or violence, or being homeless. The videos help them think through their case."

The videos are titled: Youth In Court: Defending Yourself Against a Class C Misdemeanor Charge, Defending Against a Failure to Attend School Charge, Defending Against a Disorderly Conduct Charge, and Defending Against an Assault Charge. The videos explain how youth can plead (differences between guilty, no contest and not guilty), the potential outcomes of various pleas, and how to prepare a defense, among other court-related information. The general Youth In Court video features Travis County Judge Yvonne M. Williams, who provides general information such as how to prepare for court and what to expect in a courtroom.

(more)

"It is especially important that we inform children of their rights when facing criminal charges, since they are often unrepresented by an attorney," said Kathryn Newell with TRLA. "While these videos are not a substitute for legal representation, they provide valuable information and explain where children can go to get help."

The Youth in Court videos were produced with the generous financial support of the Texas Bar Foundation.

About Texas Appleseed

Texas Appleseed is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote social and economic justice for all Texans by leveraging the skills and resources of volunteer lawyers and other professionals to identify practical solutions to difficult, systemic problems. www.TexasAppleseed.net

About Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc.

Established in 1970, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services to low-income and disadvantaged clients in a 68-county service area. TRLA's mission is to promote the dignity, self-sufficiency, safety and stability of low-income Texas residents by providing high-quality legal assistance and related educational services. www.trla.org

About the Texas Bar Foundation

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$14 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

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