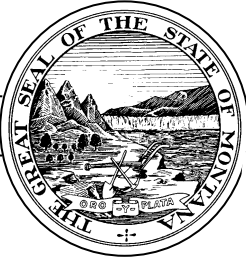


OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



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June 27, 2016

To: Montana Public Defender Commission
From: Kristina Neal, Conflict Coordinator
RE: Report to the Commission

UPDATES

Operating plan

The Conflict Coordinator Program appoints counsel in approximately 6,000 cases each year. Although my program relies predominantly upon private contract counsel to handle this workload, for FY 2016, my operating plan had been to bring on six modified FTE assistant public defenders to work in home-based settings. My rationale behind this plan was to be able to more efficiently provide attorneys in parts of the state where the contract attorney pool is limited and to replace variable costs with fixed cost resources. The attorneys' locations have been and will be based on regional needs and regional conflict attorney costs.

Current office structure

My office is staffed by myself and 8.00 FTE.

Administrative Support:

My office has one support staff, Cassie Kane. Cassie not only provides administrative support to me, she also closes all of the conflict cases, assists the assistant public defenders when needed and serves as a central office manager and coordinator.

Assistant Public Defenders:

Missoula: I have two assistant public defenders based in Missoula, Leta Womack and Lisa Kauffman. Leta and Lisa primarily handle cases in Region 2 (Missoula, Ravalli and Sanders counties). However, both Leta and Lisa have been willing to assist in cases in other counties, such as Powell, Sanders and Lake, in situations in which no local conflict attorneys were available for the cases. In order to minimize travel and provide efficiency, Leta and Lisa have divided the courts in their region.

Great Falls: I have two assistant public defenders based in Great Falls, Travis Cushman and Betty Carlson. Travis and Betty handle cases both in Region 3 (Cascade, Teton, Pondera, Toole, and

Glacier counties) and in Region 6 – Havre and north-central Montana. Currently, I only have three contract attorneys in Hill County. Therefore, if these attorneys are too over-loaded or have a conflict with a case, I often will need to assign an attorney from Great Falls. Therefore, Betty and Travis's assistance in these matters has saved travel expenses that would otherwise have been paid to a conflict attorney traveling from the Great Falls area. Similar to the Missoula attorneys, Travis and Betty also have divided the courts in Cascade County to maximize efficiency. For example, Travis primarily handles cases which have been assigned to Judge Pinski and Judge Best and Betty primarily handles cases which have been assigned to Judge Sandefur and Judge Kuntzman.

Billings: I have two full-time assistant public defenders in Billings, Matthew Claus and Cody Atkins, and one half-time assistant public defender, Roberta Drew. Matt handles district court and youth court cases primarily in Billings but has taken cases in Fergus, Musselshell and Custer counties when no local counsel was available for the case. Cody primarily handles lower court cases in Yellowstone County but, similar to Matt, has also made himself available for out of area cases when needed. Roberta begins her position in my program on July 11, 2016.

Helena: Sarah Corbally works as a half-time assistant public defender. Sarah came to the Office of the State Public Defender after serving as the Chief Administrator of the Child and Family Services Division. Sarah will handle youth in need of care cases in the Helena and Great Falls vicinity. She has also agreed to serve as a training resource for DN cases.

Case management

The Conflict Coordinator Office utilizes the same case weighting system as Program 1, the Public Defender program. My program also utilizes the case same time-keeping case management system as Program 1.