



OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER STATE OF MONTANA

January 3, 2017

To: Montana Public Defender Commission

From: Peter Ohman, Training Coordinator

Re: Training Report (10/01/2016 – 12/31/2016)

Since the last report we have conducted the following training events.

On October 12 – 13, OPD held its Annual Conference in Bozeman. There were 226 individuals plus ten presenters in attendance, which was the most people we have had at an annual conference since OPD opened its doors in 2006. Over 200 of the participants were lawyers, 14 were investigators and the remainder were staff who presented, worked sessions and assisted with administration. Speakers included law professors from California, New York and Washington State. Topics included advocacy in abuse and neglect cases, forensics, cross examination techniques, ethics sessions and more. Those who attended the entire conference earned 12 CLE credits and two ethics credits, so long as they attended both ethics sessions.

On December 1, OPD provided a one-hour webinar on file management and online resources for public defenders. OPD's IT Supervisor, Kyle Belcher, taught lawyers about Office 365, which includes OneDrive, an application that permits attorneys to access their files from any connected device, allowing them to work from court, home or wherever they have an internet connection. Mr. Belcher showed attorneys the different ways they could access OneDrive, how to store files on it, how to share files with others, and how to ensure their works remains secure on this cloud storage system. Mr. Belcher also introduced in-house lawyers to CRM. CRM is the software program OPD has begun to use for internal processes, such as expert fee requests and other costs related to cases involving third-party vendors. The training was the equivalent of an office management CLE for sole practitioners or others who are trying to use technology to improve their practice and better serve their clients.

OPD was able to send an attorney to the National Juvenile Defender Center Summit in late October. This three-day training introduces both new and experienced attorneys to the unique practice of representing adolescents in criminal proceedings.

OTHER MATTERS

In addition to specific training events the training office provides direct support in a variety of ways. We participate in one-on-one online meetings with new attorneys; provide orientations in the areas of sentencing, client relationships, DUIs, and civil commitment proceedings; provide management orientation and continued efforts to support management skills development; send teams to offices upon request for one-day in-person trainings; and maintain the Brief Bank.

The training office also assists with Central Office operations working with regional deputies and staff to ensure compliance with the case weight system. Administrative Assistant, Chris Thomas, has traveled to multiple locations around the State to assist offices with agency procedures. Not only have she and others trained on eligibility, but they have also coached support staff in areas such as efficient use of the case management system, discovery, and file management. Ms. Thomas is also the Vehicle Manager for all OPD cars and assists in regular Communications Meetings.

The Training Coordinator has also been appointed as the Interim Chief Administrator. This has resulted in a number of new responsibilities including budget management, legislative matters, and supervision. In addition the Training Coordinator is involved with a number of boards and commissions. These include membership on the Court Assessment Program Advisory Committee, the Interim Commission on Sentencing, the SJ 24 Working Group, the Western Juvenile Defender Center Board, the National Association for Public Defense Education Workgroup, and the Youth Justice Council. All of these entities are directly involved in projects that have an impact on OPD business.

Brent Getty, formerly of the Kalispell office, works in the Missoula branch of the training office. He supervises the internship program with the University of Montana Law School, supervising multiple third-year law students who are representing clients in a variety of misdemeanor cases and before the Sentence Review Panel.

The training office also handles Sentence Review cases for OPD. The Sentence Review Division is composed of a three-judge panel of district court judges. The Panel sits six times per year – quarterly for men and biannually for women. The hearings take place at the Montana State Prison or the Montana Women’s Prison. Meeting with clients prior to hearings can be time consuming due to the fact the clients are in placements throughout Montana. The office handled approximately 200 sentence review cases in fiscal 2016.

Future training events may include monthly webinars, orientation for new attorneys, ongoing management training, trial skills practice, and others as the fiscal situation permits.