

OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



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To: Montana Public Defender Commission
From: Randi Hood, Chief Public Defender
RE: Report to the Commission

Caseload

As I indicated last meeting, my caseload is at zero. I have completed coordinating the efforts to put together a team in the Cheetham/Miller homicide case which may become a death penalty case. The mitigation specialist has done an investigation and a mental health evaluation is being done. The results of those investigations will go to the county attorney in an attempt to impact the use of the death penalty.

Legislative reports and meetings

The agency has continued to monitor those bills that may impact the system and our clientele. I continue to spend a significant amount of time reviewing bills for fiscal impact. Once the fiscal impact is determined, I appear as an informational witness on any bill for which we have prepared a fiscal note.

I have met or corresponded with a number of legislators about SB 187. Harry and I also met with Senator Shockley to find some common ground. We've provided our supporters with a lot of information relating to problems with the bill as well as suggested positive changes to Title 47 that they may want to consider.

Harry, Fritz, Joslyn and I attended the hearing to close the Section D budgets. Our information is that the budget will not get to House Appropriations for hearing until the first week of March.

John R. Justice loan forgiveness

We will be meeting to review the John R. Justice applications on February 23. They come to us as blind applications, recognizable only by number. Public defenders have submitted 23 applications. I will report the outcome of that meeting at the commission meeting, but the Board of Crime Control will not make the final awards until their March meeting.

Participation in other boards, committees

I attended the February 18 meeting of the Council on Courts of Limited Jurisdiction.

Management meetings

I met with my Executive Committee to discuss the management training focus for this year. We are focusing on insuring that public defender offices are healthy, supportive places to work. We will meet in mid-March to further develop that training and review other Top 10 items.

I continue to have occasional conference calls with the Regional Deputy Public Defenders. I am not planning on a regional meeting until May. There is too much going on with the legislature to find a date that I could be assured I wouldn't have to be at the Capitol.

Performance appraisals

As of February 17, I have completed seven of my 15 performance appraisals. I hope to report completion of all of them by the commission meeting.