

How to Become an OPD Contract Attorney

The Office of the State Public Defender contracts with qualified attorneys to represent indigent people in felony, misdemeanor, juvenile, dependent/neglect and involuntary commitment cases throughout the state of Montana. Any attorney licensed to practice law in Montana should follow these steps to be placed in the Office of State Public Defender (OPD) pool of contract attorneys:

1. Complete the **Summary of Education and Experience** ([PDF](#)) ([MS Word](#))
2. Forward the completed form to the Contract Manager for review. The Contract Manager may contact you with questions. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be sent to a qualified attorney, to be signed and returned to the Contract Manager.
3. Upon receipt of a signed MOU, the Contract Manager or designee will forward the Summary of Education and Experience to the Regional Deputy Public Defender (RDPD) in the region(s) in which the attorney has indicated he/she is available to accept cases and to the Conflict Coordinator.
4. The RDPD has sole discretion in assigning non-conflict cases to contract attorneys, and the Conflict Coordinator has sole discretion in assigning all conflict cases. Assignments are based upon the expertise and experience of the contract attorney, the types of cases they have agreed to accept, their current caseload and the needs of the region. OPD is not obligated to assign any specific number of cases to an attorney nor is any attorney obligated to accept any case offered by OPD for assignment. Attorneys with little experience in an area of practice must demonstrate the ability to handle increasingly complex or difficult cases (e.g., demonstrate ability in misdemeanor cases before being assigned felony cases).
5. The Contract Manager may determine that certain contract attorneys should not be assigned cases or be assigned specific types of cases, due to billing issues, lack of proficiency, substantiated complaints, etc. and will notify the RDPDs and the Conflict Coordinator of the determination.

NOTE: All potential contractors must read the OPD practice [Standards](#), prior to signing the MOU. In addition, they should be familiar with the required [forms](#), [policies](#), [training opportunities](#) and [Commission](#) information available on the website.

Contact the Contract Manager at 406-496-6080 with questions.