

OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR

WILLIAM F. HOOKS
CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF MONTANA

Phone: (406) 496-6080
Fax: (406) 496-6098
www.publicdefender.mt.gov

44 WEST PARK STREET
BUTTE, MONTANA 59701

September 25, 2015

To: Montana Public Defender Commission

From: Wendy Johnson, Contract Manager

RE: Report to the Commission

State of the Contract Program.

There are 244 contract/conflict attorneys with a current MOU, 31 investigators with a current MOU, and 66 mental health providers with a current MOU. The current rate of pay for contract attorneys is \$62/hour.

Contract Manager Activity.

The following is a brief explanation of all that has taken place over the past few months.

New Forms and Policy/Procedure

All of our contract/conflict attorneys, investigators, and mental health providers have signed the new MOU. I am working with our accounting staff and Kristina Neal, Conflict Coordinator, to update the policies related to Accounts Payable and general billing procedures so as to reflect the changes that are occurring with implementation of our new online billing system.

Proficiency Determinations

Proficiency Determinations are ongoing. While I was out on maternity leave, my able assistant Lynn MacMillan continued to compile much of the information related to proficiency determination packets and I am working hard to complete those evaluations. We are optimistic that we will have all contract attorneys evaluated within the two-year allotted time period.

Online Billing System

Following months of planning and hours and hours of working with an outside contractor, we are happy to announce that our online billing system is complete! Contract attorneys in five of our regions have been using the system and we have plans to implement the system in all remaining regions in the next few months. We have received very positive feedback

from those who are using the system, including both our internal users and also contract attorneys and their staffs. There are several benefits we have been able to discern relating to the online system, including the following:

- It is user friendly! All the contract attorney needs is a computer and a scanner. There is no need to print anything out.
- There is no longer confusion relating to which cases are conflict and which cases are non-conflict.
- While each contract attorney is able to enter the information relating to hours worked, mileage, and other expenses, there is no need for them to compute the actual charges related to the incurred expense because the system does the math for them.
- Each contractor is able to see exactly where in the process their claim is.

Overall, we are very pleased with the system and we are excited to implement the system state-wide.

Miscellaneous Information

- Closing forms are being entered into our case management system for contract cases on a daily basis. Lynn MacMillan closes approximately 400 cases every month. Case audits are still being done on a region by region basis every month which is helping us to ensure that case counts and the information for each contract attorney are accurate.
- We currently have over 75 contract attorneys who are signed up to attend the annual conference in October. This will be our best turnout for the annual conference by our contract attorney pool.
- Finally, I would like to sincerely thank the Central Office Staff, Kristina Neal, Peter Ohman, Jennifer Streano, Lynn MacMillan, Kyle Belcher and Chief Hooks for all of their assistance in keeping the contract program running smoothly while I was out on maternity leave. Thank you all so much!