



STATE OF MONTANA

Office of the State Public Defender

October 2014
Report to the Public Defender Commission
Catherine Huston, Liaison for Investigators and Support Staff

SUPPORT STAFF:

Wages/Salary Survey:

We cannot emphasize enough that Support Staff wages have been, and continue to be a major concern. The wage gap and discrepancies in pay within our organization are only widening. The Support Staff's current salaries are based on a 2006 market. We're sitting at 2014 this next session, and we haven't even been able to move our staff to the 2012 market salary. Members of the Support Staff are anticipating the OPD to fight as hard for staff as they did for the attorneys. Based on the conversations at the last LMC meeting, both investigators and attorneys are very supportive of focusing on our Support Staff.

****The OPD wages for SS members are so low, staff members are working two jobs, qualifying for public assistance, taking time off work to get food boxes for their families at the local food banks. Our staff members are considered indigent by state standards, and to put it into perspective, they work for one hours pay before taxes to buy two gallons of milk or three gallons of gas. It has been 7 years since they have seen an internal OPD support staff raise.**

INVESTIGATORS:

Investigator Training: The investigator training was held August 21st and 22nd in Livingston. The training was one of the best ones we've seen and covered a variety of areas including cell phone analysis, forensics and forensic interviewing techniques. One session was devoted to investigators having the chance to review difficult cases from other regions to offer new avenues to try when investigating, issue spotting, etc. A new view and perspective on difficult cases was very beneficial.

Investigator Firearms Bill: Ideas are welcome as far as who may be able to carry this bill if the OPD is not able or willing to sponsor the bill. Other state agencies are INCREASING safety policies and procedures and the OPD is not keeping up, nor are the investigators a priority to the state as other agencies are. (i.e.: Probation and Parole and DCI).