



PUBLIC DEFENDER NEWS

A New Season

*Rhonda Schaffer,
Director*

A couple of weeks ago, I told you about the launch of our new Agency Operations program. Brett Schandelson



and Emily Copeland will staff this program with a focus on supporting and improving our operations on all levels, across the state. They will start by working on agency communications planning and data management, and Brett offers more details on what that will look like on page 5.

Dedicating and centralizing responsibility and staff to these projects marks a significant shift in the way we, as an agency, intend to identify, manage, and respond to issues that affect our ability to provide the best possible representation for our clients. I expect that beginning with Agency Communications we will start to see real, measurable progress on multiple issues.

I am very excited about this new chapter for OPD, and I can't wait to see where we go from here.

Thanks for all you do!

Rhonda



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Special points of interest

- Word Tips and Tricks
- Be Air Aware!
- Charitable Giving Campaign
- Open Enrollment Coming Soon

Central Services Team Update

Carleen Green, Division Administrator



It's hard to believe we are already a quarter of the way through fiscal year 2020! The accounting team (Tyna, Jennifer, Traci, Bekki and Stacy) did an outstanding job of closing the books on fiscal year 2019. Thank you to everyone who assisted with the accrual and closing cases.

We are currently working on our reporting for fiscal 2019 and it will be posted to the website when it is complete.

Kyle, John, Jeb and Steven (OPD's IT department), while busy supporting all of OPD's 300+ employees across the state, have also been working on some other projects to help improve efficiencies. Kyle is working closely with State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD) on the next generation video platform. The new platform will allow anyone to connect from any device (smart phones, computers, etc.) to the office's video conference unit. These units will also allow OPD's attorneys to dial in to the court's video network. This is a brand-new platform and service from SITSD that has not been fully developed. The platform is currently going through SITSD's mandatory security assessment. We hope to have these installed no later than the end of the calendar year.

The electronic Conflict Request form in the attorney portal (similar to the online pre-approvals) is currently being piloted in three Regions. This is a task-based system which integrates with JustWare to streamline the conflict referral process. Kyle and Marsha are awaiting feedback from those three Regions as well as the Conflict Division before it is implemented statewide.

Something else we can look forward to that Kyle, Marsha and Brett are working on is the ability to text clients their appointment or court date reminders from JustWare and Outlook. This will give you a way to track those communications to your clients.

Marsha has been working on some other projects such as changing documents in JustWare so they are e-file compatible as well as updating, automating and simplifying the complaint process through JustWare.

We are also going through the JustWare and Tableau reports in an effort to make them more useful for you.

If you need any additional training on eligibility or have any eligibility questions, please contact Tyna, Shane, John or me and we'll be happy to help.

Central Services is here to support you in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to call if you need help or have any questions.

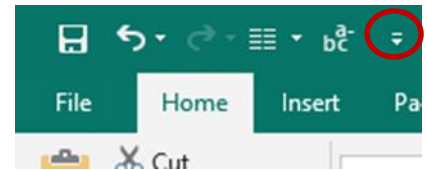


Word Tips and Tricks

Last time we talked about the Quick Access Toolbar (located above or beneath the ribbon). If you miss being able to "close all" or "save all" Word documents (available in earlier versions of Word), you'll be happy to know that the QAT can restore your powers.

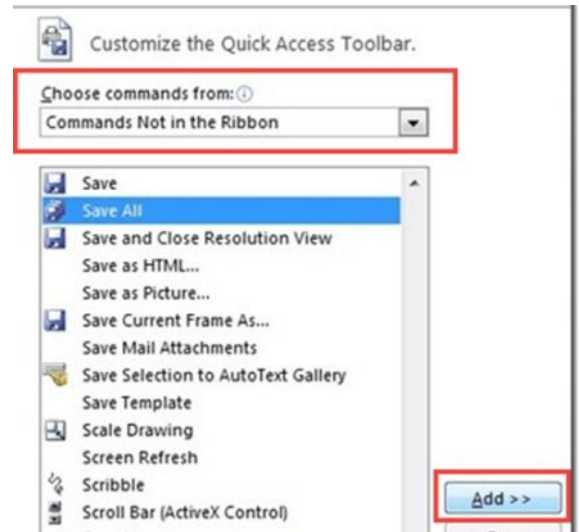


Click the down arrow on the QAT and choose



More Commands. In the drop down, change from Popular Commands to Commands Not in the Ribbon.

Scroll down to "Close All" and click Add>>. Scroll down to "Save All" and Add>> that one, too.



If you like, you can reorder items in the QAT using the up and down arrows in the right hand column.

And while we're talking about Saving, F12 is a favorite keyboard shortcut for "Save As" in Word, Excel or Publisher. Use it *before* you start changing your existing document.

Adam Larsen Receives Governor's Award for Excellence

Peter Ohman, Public Defender Division Administrator

Adam Larsen, our Regional Deputy in Lewistown (and the six counties he and his staff serve), travels great distances across central Montana to serve our clients. This entails countless early morning journeys on snowy roads, late nights keeping an eye out for wildlife, and loss of time with family and friends.



Recently, a client Adam represented as a juvenile was so impressed with his work and dedication that she started law school with the express purpose of becoming a public defender!

Adam is one of those invaluable state employees who puts his head down, does the work, does it well, and serves the citizens of Montana the way they deserved to be treated – with respect, competence, and in furtherance of the individual rights set forth in the Montana Constitution.

In presenting the awards, Governor Bullock said, "It's a great honor to recognize the employees who work each day to make this state a better place to live, work and raise a family. Our employees are hardworking and dedicated to providing invaluable public service that impacts the lives of Montana citizens daily."

Congratulations, Adam!

Eli Parker Selected for Bousliman Professionalism Award

Peter Ohman, Public Defender Division Administrator

Congratulations to Missoula Public Defender Eli Parker for being the recipient of the State Bar's 2019 George L. Bousliman Professionalism Award.

Eli's specialty is representing clients in involuntary commitment and guardianship cases. Judges and opposing attorneys hold him in the highest regard as he advocates for his clients' wishes.

Thank you, Eli, for showing one of the many faces of OPD through your outstanding work.



OUR MISSION

We provide effective professional legal services with equal access to quality client-centered representation.

OUR VISION

As trained legal professionals we strive to represent our clients in an effective and efficient manner to ensure a more fair and balanced justice system. We are dedicated and committed to improving overall outcomes for our clients and addressing the conditions that led to their involvement with the justice system.

Training Office Docket

Nate McConnell, Training Development Coordinator

The Training Department has been busy the last couple months. Here are the highlights.

Boise and Seattle Conferences

The Team Mitigation Institute, hosted by the National Association for Public Defense (NAPD), took place in Boise in August. Montana's OPD sent three teams of attorneys and investigators to learn about team mitigation. The conference focused on the client-centered representation that has always been the hallmark of OPD. Topics ranged from getting to know clients as people and how investigators and attorneys can work as a team, to dealing with our clients' chemical dependency and mental illness and mapping out our clients' stories.

The We the Defenders conference, also hosted by NAPD, took place in Seattle in September. OPD social workers attended sessions ranging from identifying personality traits in clients and writing effective reports to dealing with trauma and self-care.

We look forward to learning from our teams in upcoming webinars.

ICWA Conference

Several OPD team members attended the ICWA conference in Polson in September. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes teamed up with the Tribal Court Improvement Project to present a two-day conference that focused on best practices in child welfare cases, tribal code enhancement, and ethics. Using small groups to encourage participation, attendees learned about best practices and shared common issues in child welfare practice. The conference, which just completed its sixth year, is fast becoming a vital tool for our practitioners.

Webinars

The Training Department is working hard to develop webinars related to all areas of practice. Our current slate of webinars includes a brief-writing webinar presented by Marilena David-Martin of Michigan's State Appellate Defender Office. Marilena is a national leader in appellate practice and training.

We are also excited to announce webinars presented by our own team members. Buddy Rutzke will present on DN practice in the wake of the recent *EYR* decision. Joel Thompson has agreed to present on sexual assault cases, focusing on investigations. We are always open to providing opportunities for our people to conduct webinars!

Annual Conference

This year's annual conference is our most ambitious to date. We are introducing seven tracks designed to address issues facing particular areas of practice within our client-centered focus. We have presentations aimed at practice fundamentals, sentencing, and veterans' issues, as well as sessions aimed at dealing with sentencing, DN practice, and wellness. We are happy to welcome Deja Vishny back to Montana, alongside a host of national experts in a range of practice areas. Thanks to all of you who suggested topics and agreed to present. We couldn't do it without you. Your feedback on the conference is going to be vital in the direction we take going forward, so please be on the lookout for the post-conference survey!



NAPD Membership

We were proud to announce OPD's membership in NAPD last month. If you haven't had the chance to visit NAPD's website, please take a few minutes to explore. NAPD has over 200 archived webinars that focus on a wide range of practice areas with a client-centered approach. Our membership provides opportunities to attend conferences, participate in webinars, and elevate our commitment to providing the best service we can to our clients. If you have any questions about our membership, please don't hesitate to ask.

Parting Note

We are happy to introduce Patrick Morrison as our Training Development Specialist. Patrick comes to us from the Missoula office where he was a social worker. Patrick has already had a big impact on training by developing webinars, creating surveys, and organizing events. As we move into the winter months, we anticipate producing a library of webinars and online resources accessible to all members of the OPD team. We are always on the lookout for training suggestions, so please let us know how we can assist you!

Operations Update

Brett Schandelson, Agency Operations Support

If I offered twenty bucks to any OPD employee that could accurately explain what the Quality Control program did, what its responsibilities were, I probably wouldn't even need to exceed my \$200 daily ATM withdrawal limit to pay out. This isn't your fault – our shifting responsibilities and a series of apparently disconnected, ad hoc projects have made it difficult to define our role, even internally. But I want to start fresh with Agency Operations Support, so let's talk about what we do, what we're up to, and what you can expect going forward.

Simply, Agency Operations Support is dedicated to supporting the work y'all do through program/platform development and by managing/coordinating Agency efforts to improve. To better explain what these mean in real life, let's look at Operations' two current top-level projects.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

As I hope you know, from my email earlier this month, we have been busy working on analyzing the Communications Survey Data and developing an action plan to address the concerns and issues identified. Once we have a plan developed, it will be reviewed by the Management Team and then shared for discussion with the wider Agency. Once a solution to an issue has been identified and approved, we will manage the Agency's efforts to implement it, coordinate with relevant stakeholders and decision makers, and provide support as necessary.

For more context on Communications Planning, please see my email from September 18, and be on the lookout for an update on this soon.

AGENCY DATA MANAGEMENT

In addition to Communications Planning, we are also currently reviewing our Agency Data Management process, identifying issues and potential solutions, and again working to implement those solutions across the Agency. In time, we will focus on both 1) refining/improving the ways in which we collect Agency Data and 2) the effective *use* of Agency Data, internally and externally. At the moment, however, we are focused on the latter – improving the ways in which we use our Agency Data.

To that end, both Emily and I recently returned from an intensive, accelerated training on the data visualization platform Tableau. Tableau allows us to display and interact with our data in entirely new ways, providing greater value by identifying important trends and telling different stories. For examples of how Tableau can be used, you can look through the [Public Tableau Gallery](#).

In the short-term, will be using Tableau to provide more complete results from the Agency Communications Survey. Over the fall, we will be using Tableau to create dashboards for our Regional Public Defenders and Conflict Managing Attorneys. To better engage other Justice System Stakeholders, with an eye towards the *next* legislative session, we will be using Tableau to more effectively tell our story – the stories of OPD and our clients – on an on-going basis.



Continued next page

Operations Update (continued)

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we're starting fresh, wiping the slate clean from Quality Control, I want to take a moment to set some expectations: from us to you, and from you to us.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

Regular Updates

The survey results were clear: you want more context and transparency, more frequently, about Agency happenings. To the extent we're able, we will be consistently communicating the who/what/where/when/how of what Operations is up to.

Summaries

While **most** of you want to see more detailed communications, some of you may not; and even if you do, you may not always have the time or energy to devote to reading and considering these lengthy communications. You are, simply, very busy people. Which is why any such communication from Operations will include a Summary, so that you may get what you need much quicker and get back to the important stuff – your work.

While we will do our best to fully inform you through the summaries, that may not always be possible, and I **always** encourage you to revisit the body of the communication when you do have the time.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

Provide Feedback

The survey results were clear: in no uncertain terms, you want more opportunities for feedback. But feedback is a two-way street, and while we will work to provide you with these opportunities, it's up to you to actually take advantage of them. For example, we intend to utilize SurveyMonkey more frequently to gather your feedback on smaller, specific issues. At times, we may ask **you** to provide potential solutions to an identified issue. At other times, we may ask for volunteers to help us solve problems we're facing, to provide targeted feedback on an issue, or to test proposed solutions.

We hope, and expect, that you will take advantage of these opportunities, and we'll do our best to ensure you'll see the value in doing so.

Finally, though, please know you don't have to wait until we've specifically asked for feedback to contribute, as you can (and should) provide your thoughts on any Operations related topics directly to us, at any time. We look forward to hearing from you.

Did You Know?

NAPD Membership

All OPD employees now have membership in the [National Association for Public Defense!](#)

Contact the Training office for additional information.

2019 MCA

The new MCA is available [online](#), but the code books haven't been published yet. Legislative Services expects to have them in late October or early November. Order on their [website](#).

Old MCAs Available Online

Looking for a previous version of the Montana Code Annotated? Maybe even one older than OPD? The Montana Legislature has versions going back to 1995 on their [website](#).

Winter Driving and More

RMTD is currently offering courses on winter driving, preventing distracted driving, and defensive driving throughout the state. Classes are free and your attendance helps reduce our premiums. Watch for announcements for a class near you, or check their schedule [online](#).

Interpreter Services

The State of Montana has a contract with CTS Language Link for interpreter services. OPD employees can access the information on OPD's [intranet](#) site.





Region 3's newest attorney, Spencer Harris, was sworn in on September 18 in front of Judge Parker in the Eighth Judicial District. Quite a few of the Great Falls staff were there in support since they so rarely get to go to court for happy occasions! Congratulations Spencer!



Perfumes, scented lotions and candles, air purifiers and other products can be difficult for people with scent sensitivities or allergies. Symptoms can include headaches, rashes, dizziness, difficulty breathing, coughing and even the onset of an asthma attack. Let's all be more fragrance-aware to improve our office environment for ourselves and our co-workers.

SECGC In Progress!

29 Years of State Employees' CHARITABLE GIVING!

September 23 to November 1

As a state employee, you make a big difference in the lives of Montanans, both in the work you do every day and in the donations you make to organizations throughout the state. Research has proven that every dollar given returns a \$3 economic impact in your community.

How much to give? How about starting with one hour's pay per pay period? Of course, feel free to give more, as many state employees do. All donations really do add up for these organizations over the course of the year.

Plus, there are weekly incentive prizes, donated by businesses and nonprofits throughout the state as a thank you. The sooner you give, the more chances you have to win a prize!

Our goal is to break \$450,000 this year. Will you be a part of a \$1.3M impact to make Montana the best it can be?

Thank you for your generosity!

Give online (and find out more about weekly prizes!) at charitablegiving.mt.gov



Live Better with the EAP!

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps you **privately** solve problems that may interfere with your work, family, and life in general. EAP services are FREE to you, your dependents and all household members. Services are confidential and provided by experts.



In-person or online confidential counseling is available, in addition to 24-hour crisis help. Counselors can help with a variety of problems such as family, parenting, relationship, stress, anxiety and other challenges.

The EAP also offers resources on childcare, eldercare, legal and financial services, mediation, home ownership and identity theft. Explore the many services they offer, including a recorded webinar on suicide prevention.

For more information, click [here](#), or contact the EAP staff at 444-1345, or eap@mt.gov.

Open Enrollment for 2020 is Coming

Open Enrollment begins October 27. You will have until November 9 to make changes to your 2020 Benefit Elections in the MINE site.

There will be interactive webcasts on October 22, 23, and 24, and they will be available for on-demand viewing following the webcasts.

The Live Life Well incentive remains at \$30 per month for participating employees, and an additional \$30 for participating spouses or domestic partners.

Visit the HCBD [website](#) for more information.



Happy Retirement, Randi!



On September 5, 2019, Randi Hood retired from employment with OPD. She was the agency's first chief public defender, an accomplished trial lawyer, an attorney with the Major Crimes Unit and a Region 4 attorney for the last year and half. During her recent time with Region 4, she was in trial numerous times and spent much of her time sharing her wisdom and skills with the rest of us. All of us in the Helena office will miss her and are thankful for having the time that we had to work with her.