



OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER STATE OF MONTANA

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montana Public Defender Commission

FROM: Wendy Johnson, Contract Manager
Kyle Belcher, IT Supervisor

DATE: January 13, 2017

RE: PROPOSAL TO USE PDC DISCRETIONARY FUNDS TO COMPLETE
CRM PROJECT

The Public Defender Commission previously set aside \$10,000 in discretionary funds to be used to bring representatives from the National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) to Montana to discuss challenges facing the current public defender system. Only a portion of that money was used for that purpose. It is our understanding that there is just under \$8,000 that remains unused.

The Public Defender Commission previously invested \$100,000 of the discretionary funding towards the development of the online pre-approval and contractor billing system. Unfortunately, the project proved more complicated than anticipated and the funding was not sufficient to complete development of all features. We have completed the pre-approvals and online billing for mental health providers and contract investigators. We have also added the ability to monitor total hours billed by case. We were not able to complete online pre-approvals or billing for transcriptionists and expert witnesses. If the Commission adopts a contractor travel rate, additional funding would be required to implement those changes in the system. Further, we have discussed how best to implement and enforce case compensation limits for our contractor workforce, and after speaking with the software developer, further work will be necessary. Any changes would need to be funded and we can provide estimates by feature if requested.

We propose that the Public Defender Commission allow us to use the unused funds allocated to the NAPD technical assistance project to complete certain features of the online pre-approval and contractor billing system that we could not afford to complete as part of the initial funding. Depending on which features we can afford to complete, it is likely that the investment of the remaining funds would result in OPD's ability to better monitor and forecast our finances, could create cost certainty, and would likely reduce the staff's time spent dealing with paper claims. It is unlikely that we could complete all the described features above for \$8,000 and prioritization of the various features will be necessary.