

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

January 21, 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, 28 investigators with a current MOU, and 61 mental health providers with a current MOU. As has been noted in my previous reports, the current rate for contract attorneys is \$62 dollars per hour as of January 1, 2014.

Contract Manager Activity.

The following is a brief explanation of all that has taken place since the Commission meeting in October.

New Forms

The process to implement the updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Attorney Education and Experience Questionnaire forms for all new contract attorneys as well as for all contract attorneys whose MOUs have expired or will expire is still ongoing. Each month we are updating a different region, which has been beneficial in that we are able to do a small amount of work every month instead of engaging in a mad rush to get everyone updated and renewed in a short amount of time.

Mental Health Coordinator and Process Update

As was noted in my previous report, Chief Hooks and I received positive feedback about our current Mental Health Coordinator Dr. Scolatti from Regional Deputy Public Defenders, full time staff, and contract attorneys throughout the state. Following discussions with Dr. Scolatti, we were able to negotiate terms that would allow him to stay on in his current capacity for another year. We have also made changes to the previous Mental Health Provider Memorandum of Understanding which was distributed and implemented in December.

Investigator Memorandum of Understanding

We have updated the Investigator Memorandum of Understanding following discussions with our current Investigator Supervisor. The changes are consistent with those made in the Attorney MOU and the Mental Health Provider MOU. Said changes were distributed and implemented in December.

Proficiency Determinations

Proficiency Determinations are underway. We have slowly but surely been compiling packets for attorneys in a variety of regions and have had positive feedback about the new process. As we gain more experience in conducting these evaluations I believe we may have the opportunity to do more in a given month provided that we don't have any glaring issues which seem to be few and far between.

Online Billing System

We have had several demonstrations for the streamlined online billing process that we hope to purchase in the very near future. The information that we have been presented demonstrates the ability to meet our general needs while at the same time appearing to be user friendly. We are hoping to have the process completed by fiscal year end, and in the interim will be involved in not only a more comprehensive development process but also many more trials and/or demonstrations of the final program. We will also develop some sort of training for our full time staff that processes claims as well as training for the many contractors who will utilize the system.