

OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



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To: Montana Public Defender Commission
From: Wendy Johnson, Contract Manager
RE: Report to the Commission

Chief Public Defender Bill Hooks hired me to replace the former Contract Manager Larry Murphy. I started in this position on January 17, 2014. The Contract Manager is assisted by one support staff member. The following is my first report to the Commission:

Contract Manager Activity.

I have been reviewing the processes and policies that relate to the contracting program, and I have had the opportunity to meet with Chief Public Defender Bill Hooks, former Contract Manager Larry Murphy, Conflict Coordinator Kristina Neal, and Chief Appellate Defender Wade Zolynski regarding the aspects of the contracting program that appear to be successful and the areas that could be improved upon. I have met with the new Training Coordinator, Peter Ohman, and believe he has many good ideas on how to increase the number of trainings that may be available to our contract attorneys. I have met with Marsha Parr, our case management program administrator, and with her help I am hoping to more fully utilize the case management program as a tool to help with the organization of the contracting program. Day to day operations have transitioned smoothly, and I am settling into the Central Office and the more administrative functions of the position, including approving contractor bills and pre-approvals.

State of the Contract Program.

There are 244 contract/conflict attorneys with a current MOU, 21 investigators with a current MOU, and 68 mental health providers with a current MOU. As of January 1, 2014, the hourly rate for contract attorneys increased to \$62 dollars an hour. Closing forms are being completed and entered into the case management program at a more efficient rate. My support staff member, Lynn MacMillan, has been able to commit more of her time to this task, and we are optimistic that the information provided by our contract attorneys will help us to demonstrate the quality of work they are putting forth, and also help us to accurately reflect the number of active cases each attorney has.