



OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER STATE OF MONTANA

October 20, 2014

To: Montana Public Defender Commission

From: Peter Ohman, Training Coordinator

Re: Training Report (8/1/2014 – 10/31/2014)

Since the last report we have conducted three significant training events.

On August 21st and 22nd the OPD investigators gathered in Livingston for their annual conference. Topics covered included presentations on toxicology, investigation of crimes involving young complainants, and an expert who talked about cellular devices with an emphasis on cell tower information and forensics. Speakers came from Helena, Missoula and North Carolina. There was also a “bring your own case” session which gave attendees an opportunity to brainstorm on some challenging investigations from the regions. Lissa Power from Region 10 received the award for Investigator of the Year.

From September 9th through the 11th we conducted the annual Boot Camp Trial Skills training at the Lubrecht Forestry Center outside of Bonner, Montana. Approximately 16 attorneys including four contract attorneys participated. The training focuses on building trial skills and includes an introduction to the Chapter method of cross-examination, theme and theory of defense, managing a high caseload, interviewing and interacting with clients, overcoming trial objections and making your record. The participants developed their voir dire skills with a mock panel who patiently and attentively sat through the entire day on Wednesday. Lawyers brought their own cases for the voir dire exercise, so hopefully they will have learned what to do and not to do when they try the matters for real. Trainers included Dave Merchant from the Federal Defenders, Bill Hooks, Annie DeWolf, Wade Zolynski, Noel Larrivee, Brigitte Menard, and Jennifer Streano.

Earlier this month OPD held its 9th Annual Attorney Conference. The event took place at the Doubletree Hotel in Missoula, Montana. Seating capacity in the main room was 200 and we reached that limit approximately a month before the training. This resulted in a waiting list, however, as people dropped out we were able to accommodate most of those who wanted to attend. Approximately 20 different sessions were offered over the two-day period. They focused on mental health issues, DN matters, ethics, and federal consequences of State convictions among others. Of note, a former client who had spent time in prison talked about the realities of life in custody, which many of the attendees found to be especially interesting and helpful.

Future training events include monthly webinars, and hopefully a management conference and training on defending clients charged with sexual offenses.