

Public Defenders Draft Strategic Plan March 21, 2007

Public Defenders General Administration

Mission Statement: Provide quality legal representation in a professional, efficient and caring manner to indigent persons accused of City non-felony offenses

Definition of Customer: Indigent defendants assigned by the District Court

Definition of Product/Service provided:

- Provide legal representation to indigent defendants on City cases
- Guarantee access to justice and assure fairness on all City criminal, non-felony cases

Strengths:

- Experienced attorneys and support staff working as a team, committed to serving the public with quality legal representation
- Independence in providing legal representation to clients without interference
- Physical separation from the prosecutors and court with a location near the courthouse campus
- Support of and access to Division Director as issues arise, particularly on systemic issues and support of the Finance Division in efforts to reduce criminal justice system costs

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient time and resources allocated to training
- Difficulty in being proactive as the Department responds to changes at the court
- Lack of political influence to bring about changes that would improve the lives of our clients

Opportunities:

- Continued or increased funding to municipalities for indigent defense by the state Office of Public Defense
- Continued or increased funding from the 1/10th of one percent sales tax for mental health
- Future possibilities of new approaches to resolution of cases and sentencing alternatives

Threats:

- State legislative changes that affect the public defender function
- Possible changes in the court structure

Top 5 Key Success Factors:

- Provide effective legal representation to indigent persons
- Work proactively with other criminal justice agencies on projects to reduce recidivism, improve offender outcomes with a possibility of behavioral changes
- Work with the County and State agencies and statewide defender organizations to improve the criminal justice system and for improved funding for City defender services

List top 5-10 goals for the group:

- Provide legal representation to indigent defendants on City cases
- Improve effectiveness of the criminal justice system
- Guarantee access to justice and assure fairness on all City criminal, non-felony cases
- Work with County and State agencies for increased funding for mental health cases and for first appearances and arraignments
- Improve communications with other criminal justice agencies to find common ground and to effect change
- Work toward systemic change through negotiation or litigation
- Work with other City criminal justice agencies to develop a standardized case counting method with a consideration of case weighting (by type or complexity)

List top 5-10 strategies for the group:

- With non-general fund resources, increase the number of personnel (attorney and support staff) and time spent on mental health cases to improve outcomes for the mentally ill (appropriate placements pretrial, evaluations, resolutions);
- With non-general fund resources, have an attorney present at all first appearances (issues of bond or release conditions) and arraignments (non-plea resolutions of cases if in client's best interest; provide advice to improve client's understanding of his circumstances or to aid in faster case resolution or to urge them to meet with assigned attorney);
- Purchase and install a database with some shared features with the City Prosecutor, and Municipal Probation, which might reduce duplicity of data entry or make other processes easier (initial assignment after financial screening; request for and receipt of police reports);
- Continue to advocate for non-jail case resolutions which improve the outcomes of the offender tailored to the crime and the client's needs (treatment, restitution, etc.) with the goal of reduced recidivism
- Work on issues relating to the issuance of arrest warrants and service of City warrants on inmates.

Tactics, Timeframes and Responsibilities:

- Work on representation of the mentally ill and continued funding issues with the RSN (Regional Support Network); Budget set for later years by 5/1/07. Kathy Knox to work with Howard Delaney, District Court Presiding and Christine Barada
- Work on Superior Court and District Court JIMHS Steering Committee, judicial solutions for the mentally ill, with all agencies; ongoing
- Work on early representation strategies for first appearances and arraignments and continued funding with the state Office of Public Defense (OPD); Budget set after receipt of application and acceptance by 9/1/07 (estimated)

- Work on integrated database for purchase by 6/1/07 and in use by 9/1/07, integrating current data into new database. Kathy Knox to work with Howard Delaney, Karla McNeilly, Garv Brakel and Dorothy Webster
- Work on jail alternatives, with the Presiding Judge, Karla McNeilly, Howard Delaney and Dorothy Webster, Joe Shogan, ongoing
- Work on issues relating to outstanding City warrants to be served on inmates, with all entities, on-going