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Media Contact
Lisa Taylor, Government Relations Manager
Lisa.Taylor@opds.state.or.us

Oregon Public Defense Commission New Name and Commissioners

Effective January 1, 2024, the Public Defense Services Commission and the Office of Public Defense Services will be known as the Oregon Public Defense Commission and the new Oregon Public Defense Commissioners will officially take office.

[SB 337](#), passed by the 2023 Legislature, outlined changes for public defense in Oregon. Among the changes are the combining of the agency and commission under one name, and changes to the makeup and appointment process for commissioners. All three branches of government now have a role in appointing new commissioners.

On November 1, 2023, the Oregon Chief Justice officially [appointed](#) the new Oregon Public Defense Commission (OPDC). The new commission will be responsible for administering Oregon's state-funded public defense system effective January 1, 2024. The new commission will hold their first official meeting on January 5, 2024, the first orders of business will include electing a chair and vice-chair as well as adopting by-laws.

SB 337 also makes significant changes to the how public defense is delivered in Oregon. Along with the new name, the Commission will move from the Judicial Branch to the Executive Branch effective January 1, 2025. By July 1, 2025, the Commission is to establish a panel of qualified attorneys to be paid an hourly rate for providing public defense services, and flat fee contracting is prohibited. By July 1, 2027, subcontracting of public defense services, except for non-profits, will no longer be permitted.

The bill also lays out a timeline to bring on state employed trial level counsel. By January 1, 2031, at least 20% of trial level counsel must be commission employees. By January 1, 2035, at least 30% of trial level counsel must be commission employees. The Commission has established its first trial level office in Portland, serving the Metro region, and has begun taking cases. A second office will open in Medford in early 2024.

For additional information regarding the Commission please visit the [website](#).

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Oregon Public Defense Commission

198 Commercial St. SE, Suite 205, Salem, OR 97301 • 503.378.3349 • www.oregon.gov/opds