

Members:

Robert Harris, Chair
 Susan Mandiberg, Vice Chair
 Stephanie Engelsman
 Alton Harvey, Jr.
 Leslie Kay
 Philippe Knab
 Tom Lininger

**Nonvoting Members:**

Rep. Paul Evans
 Haley Olson
 Caitlin Plummer
 Sen. Floyd Prozanski

Executive Director:

Kenneth Sanchagrin

Oregon Public Defense Commission Workgroup

Meeting will occur virtually
 Thursday, April 2, 2026
 5:00 to 6:30pm
 Via Zoom*

Administrative Announcement

This is a public meeting, subject to the public meeting law and it will be recorded. Discussion will only be allowed amongst Commission members and staff for the duration of this meeting. Public comment will not be allowed during this meeting.

AGENDA

Approx. Time	Item	Lead(s)
5:00-5:05	Welcome/Call to Order	Chair Harris
5:05-5:50	Briefing/Discussion: Oregon Administrative Rules	Dacia Smith
5:50-6:30	Briefing/Discussion: Policy Option Packages and Legislative Concepts	Lisa Taylor
6:30 (Approximately)	***Adjourn***	

**To join the Zoom meeting, click this link: <https://zoom.us/j/91219423263>. This meeting is accessible to persons with disabilities or with additional language service needs. Our Zoom virtual meeting platform is also equipped with Closed Captioning capabilities in various languages, which agency staff can assist you with setting up ahead of meetings.*

Requests for interpreters for the hearing impaired, for other accommodations for persons with disabilities, or for additional interpreter services should be made to info@opdc.state.or.us.

Please make requests as far in advance as possible, and at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting, to allow us to best meet your needs.

Listed times are an estimate, and the Chair may take agenda items out of order and/or adjust times for agenda items as needed.

*Next meeting: **May 7, 2026, 5-6:30pm via Zoom.***

Meeting dates, times, locations, and agenda items are subject to change by the Commission; future meeting dates are posted at: <https://www.oregon.gov/opdc/commission/Pages/meetings.aspx>

Note: *Agenda items not addressed or completed during this meeting will be carried over to the next scheduled meeting, unless otherwise directed by the Chair.*

From: [Paul Aubry](#)
To: [Info](#)
Subject: Comment on Proposed PCRP Attorney Pay Cuts
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 8:06:16 AM

Hello. I am a PCRP lawyer working in Columbia and Clatsop counties. I just reviewed the video of the 3-5-26 Commission Workgroup. At that meeting Chair Harris proposed "freezing" the pay of every PCRP attorney by \$30,000 per year until a study can determine whether the additional pay is justified. As I understand it his rationale is that OPDC lacks recent data to justify paying PCRP lawyers more than lawyers in non-PCR counties. If OPDC had actually attempted to ask for input or gather information in the last 6-7 years it would have found plenty. It seems odd to me that the Chair would assume, without any evidence or studies, that the PCRP lawyers are NOT doing the work justifying the extra compensation. Frankly, I doubt the PCRP program is even subject to cuts since it is not a new program, does not require expansion, and doesn't require new revenue? But if I am wrong, I want the Commission to be aware and educated about the PCRP.

When the PCRP was first implemented Columbia County was a test county. The evidence from those studies overwhelmingly showed that the PCRP brought about better outcomes for families. For example, within the first 2 years of the PCRP we reduced the number of children in substitute care in Columbia County by around 30%. Reducing the number of children in foster care not only reduces harm but also translates to taxpayer savings by lowering the cost of paying foster parents, certifying foster homes and decreasing the number of ODHS staff required to maintain and support those homes.

The studies I know of also show a direct correlation between the number of days a child spends in substitute care—or the number of times a foster child moves between placements—and the child's success after leaving care or becoming an adult. The more a child is moved around and the longer it takes to achieve permanency, the higher the correlation to increased levels of adult addiction, victimization and incarceration/criminalization. As a PCRP attorney, one of my most important goals is to minimize this harm. The PCRP allows me to counsel and support clients with the goal of preventing them from re-entering the system.

I firmly believe that the biggest barrier to positive outcomes for children and parents (on the OPDC side) is that lawyers do not spend enough time with clients and on their cases. The PCRP allows me that extra time to meet and communicate with clients. Recently there has been an OPDC or OSB Juv Law section workgroup (OPDC Resource Counsel Annie Borton will know the details). I agree that ALL of the proposed enhanced standards for PCRP lawyers should be approved and implemented, with the ultimate goal of holding ALL practitioners to those standards in every county. In the meantime here is a list of what some PCRP attorneys I have worked with for the last 5 years have been doing, that perhaps are not possible in non-PCR counties:

- 1) Travelling to visit foster kid clients placed under the ICPC in Utah, Arizona, Ohio, Tennessee, Nevada, etc. These trips take up multiple work days, often occur on weekends, and are in addition to handling a normal caseload.
- 2) Assisting clients with housing and education. PCRP attorneys request special education services and support for children and assist parents in obtaining and maintaining housing. We

work closely with housing agencies such as Community Action Team and other non-profits. I attend every IEP/504 meeting at school districts in both Columbia and Clatsop counties, whether I represent the child or the parent. PCRCP attorneys assist children with school disciplinary actions including expulsion hearings. The Commission should be aware that I recently visited a child client placed in a non-PCRCP county. The foster mom told me that her other foster child had not seen his lawyer in 5 years. In that same non-PCRCP county, the school district initially resisted my attempts to set up an IEP and obtain educational records, saying that they hadn't had lawyers make these requests previously and they would need to seek legal advice from the district's attorney. This was the largest school district in that county.

3) Advocating for systemic changes in the child welfare system. I was a plaintiff/Next Friend in the federal class action lawsuit Wyatt B. This litigation lasted almost 5 years. I spent hundreds of hours on this case. I believe it will bring about positive, statewide changes in the child welfare system and help attorneys and courts attempt to hold ODHS Child Welfare accountable. I never could have dedicated the needed time and energy to this case if I were a non-PCRCP attorney. Yesterday another PCRCP lawyer and I met with the judges in an attempt to prevent youth from being charged in adult court for motor vehicle, DUII and fish and wildlife cases. PCRCP lawyers consistently make similar systemic change efforts.

4) Fully participating in JCIP meetings with judges and community partners. We regularly meet and collaborate with the Juvenile Departments of Columbia and Clatsop to reduce harm for youth, ensuring each youth gets the attention and support that may prevent involvement with the adult criminal system and minimize the impacts of the delinquency system.

5) Attending all WRAP (for higher-needs children) meetings with our local Behavioral Health providers. PCRCP lawyers attend them for both Dependency and Delinquency cases, and for both child and parent clients.

I work evenings and weekends. I work about 50 hours a week or more, not including admin time (such as the mandatory PCRCP monthly timesheets tracking work on each case). For the majority of the PCRCP program, I have consistently had a case count of 80 or more. I hire and retain specially trained, experienced staff out of pocket to ensure all my clients are supported. I do not take retained cases or extra cases whatsoever, so that I can focus on my PCRCP clients. If OPDC reduced my salary by \$30,000 per year it would severely impact my ability to save for retirement and I would look for a new job.

The unrepresented crises was mostly caused by underpaying lawyers for decades, which resulted in disinterest in public defense work from generations of law school grads. It is very disappointing to hear OPDC propose cutting funding that has already been approved and contracted. Instead, we should raise the bar with the goal of paying every juvenile lawyer the same as the PCRCP. Even with enhanced PCRCP pay, finding and retaining good lawyers in rural counties like Columbia and Clatsop is difficult. Heck how about having law students/young lawyers work with PCRCP lawyers under the enhanced standards? I would be happy to join in on such efforts.

For more important feedback, OPDC should start by contacting judges who have presided over counties both pre and post PCRCP. I suggest starting with the Honorable Dawn McIntosh in Clatsop County.

Thank you for considering this comment.

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To: OPDC
From: The members of Defense Investigators of Oregon
Date: March 9, 2026

In 1985, defense investigators working on state public defense cases were paid \$25 per hour. Since that time, as inflation has risen, the limited increase in investigator rates have never kept up with the rising cost of living.

As of January of 2026, the equivalent of \$25 per hour in 1985 would be over \$77 per hour (according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Defense investigators in Oregon state court public defense cases are currently paid \$59 per hour. This is more than **30% less** than the rate that investigators were paid at in 1985.

Oregon investigators working on state public defense cases continue to seek a correction to the investigator rate which would bring payment back to the equivalent of what we were paid in 1985.

Given the trends in cost of living and inflation, the rate that would bring investigators in line with 1985 rates for the 2027/2029 biennium would be \$80 per hour. Current trends predict that by July of 2029, the equivalent of \$25 per hour in 1985 will be more than \$81 per hour.

The Federal Courts have recently raised the rate for fact investigators working on federal public defense cases to \$100 per hour — 69.5% more than the rate offered by OPDC.

Defense investigators are asking OPDC to propose a rate increase and correction for fact investigators. This can be a cost-neutral request based on the offset by savings that OPDC is projecting in other budget adjustment areas, and based on the waning use of special rates for attorneys and investigators in cases that were on the unrepresented list prior to July 1, 2025. We ask OPDC to include an investigator rate increase in its budget or in a policy option package for the 2027/2029 biennium as a place holder, in the event that budget projections improve.

Bringing defense investigators compensation up to the 1985 level would not only benefit investigators, it would have crucial benefits for OPDC and for Oregon taxpayers. When criminal defense investigation has such disparities in rates (such as exists between the state and federal courts, between state-appointed and retained, between Oregon and Washington/Idaho, and between the state and their own trial division), this necessarily translates to fewer investigators and less experienced investigators — all of which slows down and increases costs for public defense. In your deliberations and planning, please recall that investigators are the most necessary support staff for attorneys and that it is much more cost effective to hire more investigators and pay them well than to pay attorneys to do investigation work at twice the rate.