



Office of Public Defense Services

OPDS Teleconference with Oregon Public Defense Providers
March 24th, 2020 10:30am – 11:30am PST

Teleconference Recap

Questions? Please send them to Kaysea.R.Dahlstrom@opds.state.or.us.

Intro (Lane Borg)

- This is the first conference call – we will be hosting this gathering on a weekly basis until the COVID-19 pandemic is done.
- The role of OPDS is to support public defenders and be a conduit to other government agencies and advocate for you.
- We have been in close communications with OJD, the Sheriff's Association and other system partners. We want our partners to consider the issues and challenges public defenders are facing.

Current Contracts (Lane Borg)

- We do not see the need to cut or reduce contracts. Public defenders and the courts are still an essential function during this emergency.
- OPDS will continue to make timely payments.
- While trials and hearings may be on hold, we encourage you to take the extra time you have to work with your clients and their cases.

Request for Proposals (Lane Borg)

- We are considering whether the Request for Proposals ("RFP") needs to be delayed.
- We are still advocating for the \$20 million appropriation we need for the RFP. If the Special Purpose Appropriation ("SPA") does not get released in upcoming special sessions or through the emergency board, we may need to delay with RFP.
- Now with the COVID-19 crisis, in addition to this being essential to keep our public safety system strong, we also see this as needed economic stimulus.
- Please email us with your input on this.

Legislative Update (Kimberly McCullough)

- The majority of the \$20 million SPA would go out to public defenders to help bring down caseloads, address pay disparities and pay for overhead.
- While we were successful in advocating for the funding, the Republican walkout ended the session before the budget bill could be passed.
- Now we will be seeking this funding through the emergency session to address COVID-19 or the emergency board, which would meet in April.

- Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor's office committed to working with stakeholders to propose structural changes to the public defense system by convening a transformation committee.
- We are still planning to move forward but because of how hectic the situation is right now, it may be necessary to slow down the plans.
- We will at least need to find different ways to receive input.
- We are also working on publishing a COVID-19 webpage for providers and clients this week.¹

DHS Update (Keren Farkas)

- DHS has suspended family visitation for two weeks.
- Concerned about what that means for families and reunification.
- We want to work with providers to look for solutions.
- We are urging courts to make individualized decisions regarding visitation, because each court has different technological capacity.
- Working on a juvenile-focused survey to think about creative solutions. Let us know if you're interested.

ABA Timekeeping Study (Eric Deitrick)

- The ABA caseload study was funded by the 2018 Legislature to understand how many cases attorneys should take per year, how many FTEs we currently have and how many FTEs are necessary in Oregon.
- As part of that study, we asked public defenders to participate in timekeeping. We are grateful for how many of you who participated.
- However, with the current situation, what people would be measuring right now would not be reflective of ordinary times. So, we have suspended timekeeping.
- The study will keep going and we will still be able to estimate reasonable caseloads.

Justice System Updates (Lane Borg)

- The Sheriffs' Association reported that jail commanders are working with attorneys individually to give them access to their clients. If you are having challenges with this, let OPDS know.

¹ The COVID-19 webpage has since been published.

You can find it here: <https://www.oregon.gov/opds/provider/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>.