

IDS' Mission, Resources & Policies

2009 Misdemeanor Defender Program

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A. IDS' Mission

Effective July 2001, IDS was created to:

- Enhance oversight of the delivery of counsel and related services
- Improve the quality of representation and ensure the independence of counsel
- Establish uniform policies and procedures for the delivery of services
- Generate reliable statistical information in order to evaluate the services provided and funds expended
- Deliver services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner without sacrificing quality representation

In "Short"

- IDS' statutory mission is to enhance the quality, uniformity, efficiency, accountability, and cost-effectiveness of indigent defense services in North Carolina
- IDS' policies are all aimed at fulfilling one or more aspect of that statutory mission

B. Some Things IDS Does to Enhance Quality & Efficiency

1. Legislative Advocacy and a Seat at the Table for Indigent Defense

- IDS regularly advocates for indigent defense at the General Assembly, and has obtained substantial increases in funding over the past 8 years
- IDS makes one appointment to the NC Judicial Council, in addition to the public defender appointment (G.S. 7A-409)
- IDS worked to get 2 defense attorneys appointed to the AOC Criminal Forms Subcommittee
- IDS works closely with the NC Advocates for Justice and other groups on various initiatives impacting the defense function

2. Systemic Reform Efforts

- IDS regularly engages in studies and initiatives that are designed to prompt reforms that would enhance efficiency and/or quality
- This year's final budget bill directs IDS to:
 - Consult with AOC, the DA's Conference, the Sentencing Commission, and others about proposals to reduce future costs, including decriminalization of minor misdemeanors and improving the way that capital cases are screened and processed; and
 - Continue exploring pilot tests of more efficient scheduling practices that would minimize defense attorney wait time

More Efficient Scheduling

- To help us design one or more pilot programs that will lead to real improvements, IDS conducted a survey on district court criminal scheduling in April 2009
- The survey asked defense attorneys, judges, prosecutors, and clerks questions about current scheduling practices and problems, as well as best practices or innovative systems
- We have almost completed our analysis of the survey responses and hope to begin planning one or more pilot programs soon

We're Interested in Your Thoughts

- Even if there is not a legislative directive for IDS to investigate and propose reforms in a specific area, we are always interested in systemic reforms that would enhance quality and efficiency
- If you have ideas based on your work on the front lines, please let us know!

3. Improved Defender Training

- To improve quality and to help you obtain meaningful CLE credits, IDS has a standing contract with the School of Government ("SOG") to provide defender education programs
- Thanks to the hard work of SOG faculty and staff, IDS has developed a number of new and innovative training programs

Some Examples of Programs

- A 5-day trial advocacy school for public defenders (unfortunately, the 2009 trial school was cancelled due to the budget crisis)
- A hands-on training program for appellate attorneys
- Specialized programs for attorneys who handle involuntary commitment cases, juvenile delinquency cases, and abuse/neglect/dependency and TPR cases
- Training for public defender staff investigators

On-Line Training

- In response to the budget crisis and the limitations on travel, SOG has recently been concentrating on new on-line training programs, such as:
 - 10/23/09: A/N/D webinar (case and legislative update);
 - 11/6/09: Criminal law webinar (case and legislative update); and
 - “Virtual CLEs:” Self-paced on-line presentations that may be accessed from any computer with an Internet connection

Past Training Materials

- Materials that are used in IDS-sponsored programs are posted on the IDS website, and can be downloaded for free
- A comprehensive Training Materials Index is also posted on the website
- To access past training materials and the index, go to www.ncids.org, and click on “Training Materials”

PD Needs Assessment

- Also thanks to the hard work of Alyson Grine, SOG Defender Educator, IDS conducted a training needs assessment of all PD Offices several years ago
- The goal of the assessment was to gather information on the training and support that is currently in place for new APDs with limited experience, and to determine what SOG and IDS can do to better support the offices

PD Needs Assessment Themes

- Some themes in your responses to the Needs Assessment included:
 - Additional training would be helpful for new hires with less than six months of experience
 - You wanted more SOG training programs, including a “bench trial school” where misdemeanor attorneys could develop their trial skills
 - You wanted additional training on traffic law and DWIs
 - Many of you expressed a desire for more written materials and checklists

Responses to PD Needs Assessment

- In response to the Needs Assessment, SOG and IDS have made a number of improvements to our training programs and resources, such as:
 - During 2007 and 2009, Alyson presented a series of misdemeanor skills tutorials for new hires at PD Offices around the State, which addressed pleadings, defenses and sentencing, and incorporated new checklists for attorneys
 - Several new components were added to this Misdemeanor Defender Program, including a bench trial skills component, enhanced sessions on DWI motions practice, and a domestic violence session

Responses to PD Needs Assessment

- More responses include:
 - As part of IDS’ contract with the NC Advocates for Justice, each APD now receives a CD-ROM of NCAJ’s DWI Trial Notebook
 - There is an on-line Tao Gui tutorial available on the IDS website
 - An orientation notebook has been developed for new APDs, which focuses on the training and resources available to new hires, as well as pertinent IDS policies

NCAJ Membership

- For the past three years, IDS has had a contract with the NC Advocates for Justice, which entitles every APD to the benefits of NCAJ membership, a free 1-day CLE, and subscription on the NCAJ criminal defense listserv
- NCAJ was generous enough to continue this benefit for the first quarter of this fiscal year at no cost to IDS
- Now that the budget is final, IDS has again entered into this same contract with NCAJ
- We hope this benefit is helpful to your practices

Non-IDS Programs

- IDS sometimes approves requests from APDs to attend specialized training programs that are sponsored by groups other than IDS and SOG, especially if they address topics that are not covered by the IDS-SOG calendar and the attendee is willing to serve as a future trainer on the topic
- To seek approval to attend such a program, you need to complete form AOC-A-182 ("Request for Special Travel and Training") and submit it to the IDS Office in advance
 - *Note: You do NOT need to get advance approval to register for your one free NCAJ CLE*

4. Additional Resources Available on the IDS Website

- In addition to the training schedule and materials from past programs, the IDS website includes a wealth of materials that are helpful to public defenders and private appointed defense attorneys
- Examples include:
 - IDS reports, such as the PD cost-effectiveness studies; and
 - The North Carolina Indigent Defense Manual Series

5. IDS Listservs

- IDS has created a number of listservs to facilitate communication with and between attorneys across the state who handle various types of cases
- The listservs have proven to be a great way to enhance communication and resource-sharing

10 IDS Listservs have been Created for:

- Chief public defenders
- Assistant public defenders
- Investigators in public defender offices
- Public defender support staff
- Capital trial attorneys
- Capital post-conviction attorneys
- Appellate attorneys
- Attorneys who represent parent-respondents in A/N/D and TPR cases
- Attorneys who handle juvenile delinquency cases
- Attorneys who handle involuntary commitment cases

Can We Add You to Any Listservs?

- You all should be on the Assistant Public Defender listserv already. If you are not receiving emails, please let us know!
- If any of you will be representing parent-respondents, or handling juvenile delinquency or involuntary commitment cases, please let us know so that we can add you to those listservs as well

6. Performance Guidelines

- Using the NLADA guidelines as a starting point, IDS developed performance guidelines for non-capital cases at the trial level that are tailored to North Carolina law and practice
- The adopted guidelines are posted on the IDS website and included as an Appendix to the North Carolina Defender Manual

Specialized Performance Guidelines

- In late 2007, the IDS Commission also adopted specialized performance guidelines for attorneys representing juveniles in delinquency proceedings and parent respondents in abuse/neglect/dependency and termination of parental rights cases
- If any of you handle these case types, the guidelines are available on the IDS website

What the Guidelines Are and Are Not

- The guidelines are:
 - A checklist of best practices and things defense counsel should consider at each stage of a criminal proceeding
 - A training tool
 - A resource for new and experienced attorneys
 - A tool for legislative advocacy and systemic reform
- The guidelines are *not* absolute standards or mandates

7. The Relationship Between Caseloads & Performance Guidelines

- We understand that performance guidelines are related to public defender caseloads, and will continue to work with the public defenders and Legislature to address caseloads and resources
- We welcome constructive feedback from defenders about the obstacles you all face, and the resources you need to incorporate the guidelines into your practices

C. How PD Offices Help Enhance Quality & Efficiency

PD Offices Enhance Quality:

- By providing an institutional counter-point to DA Offices
- By developing expertise in criminal cases, which leads to efficient quality services
- By providing an additional resource for private attorneys handling appointed cases in a district

PD Offices Also Save Money:

- PD Offices save money and increase the stability of the indigent defense fund:
 - Each FY, all of the PD Offices combined save the State money compared to what it would have cost to pay private attorneys to handle the same cases
 - PD Offices provide economies of scale
 - PD Office costs are more predictable, which makes the overall fund easier to manage

PD Office Expansion Under IDS

- North Carolina's public defender system has expanded significantly since IDS was created
- Since July 2001, new PD Offices have been established in Forsyth County, Wake County, the First Judicial District, New Hanover County, and District 29B, and existing defender offices have been enlarged
- Last fiscal year, PDs handled about 32% of the cases statewide that could be handled by PDs or private attorneys

D. What IDS Needs From PD Offices

IDS Needs PD Offices to:

1. Provide Quality Legal Services for Clients
2. Report Data Accurately & Reliably
3. Submit Fee Applications to Judges in Cases that End in a Conviction

1. Quality Legal Services for Clients

- Most importantly, IDS wants you to provide quality legal representation for your indigent clients
- We hope that the resources we provide help you do your jobs better
- If we can provide other resources that would assist you, please let us know

2. Accurate & Reliable PD Data Reporting


It all hinges on your fee applications ...

- After you complete each case, a fee application is prepared
- Each fee application is then compiled into a new on-line disposition reporting system that documents the number of cases disposed by highest charge and attorney
 - Rules for counting closed cases are posted on the IDS website

We Collect this Data Because it is Required by Law

S.L. 2005-276, § 14.12

The IDS Office must report to the General Assembly by March 1 of each year about the following matters:

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- (1) The volume and cost of cases handled in each district by assigned counsel or public defenders;
 - (2) Actions taken by the Office to improve the cost-effectiveness and quality of indigent defense, including the capital case program;
 - (3) Plans for changes in rules, standards, or regulations in the upcoming year; and
 - (4) Any recommended changes in law or funding procedures that would assist the Office in improving the management of funds expended for indigent defense services.

It's Also in Our Interests

- To justify our increased budget requests, IDS must have data that shows why we need more money
- Overall court data alone would suggest that IDS' budget should not be increased, because the total number of court dispositions over the past several years has remained relatively flat
- However, the percentage of cases that are funded out of IDS' budget has steadily increased over that same time period

It Works

- Between FY02 and FY10, IDS has obtained substantial increases in funding for indigent defense services, even when many other programs were cut or received no additional funding

Creates More Resources for You

- The Legislature now routinely approves new attorney and support positions for IDS to allocate across all defender offices. This year, the Legislature has approved 20 more new attorney and 10 more new support positions
- IDS has upgraded several administrative positions in PD offices
- IDS has authorized new contracts in PD counties to relieve overburdened PD offices
- IDS now has a recurring line item in its budget for equipment replacement in state defender offices

Your Chief PD Needs this Data:

- To assess the caseloads of his or her APDs
- To assess demands on support staff
- To demonstrate with hard data the needs of your office
- To support a request for one of the new attorney or support staff positions authorized by the Legislature

You Need this Data:

- To assess your own caseload
- To help you demonstrate your performance and value to your supervisor

3. Recoupment: Fee Applications in Cases that End in Conviction

- G.S. 7A-455 provides that, in all cases that end in a conviction, the court shall direct entry of a civil judgment against the indigent person for the money value of services rendered by a public defender
- Thus, in all such cases, public defenders are required by statute to complete a fee application and submit it to the Court

Recoupment Strengthens the Indigent Defense System

- All funds collected through recoupment go back to the indigent defense fund to pay for services to future clients
- IDS' projected receipts from recoupment are added into our budget each year
- If we fall short on our collections, we fall short on our ability to serve our clients

Recoupment Impacts the Cost-Effectiveness of PD Offices

- Recoupment tends to be lower in PD districts than non-PD districts
- Submission of PD fee applications ensures that the recoupment process is triggered, so that your offices can be as cost-effective as possible

E. What do PD Offices Need from IDS?

How Can IDS Help You?

- We want to know how IDS can help you, and welcome all feedback and suggestions
- Contact information for some IDS staff members is listed on the next screen
- Do you have any questions or comments to share at this time?

Contact Information for Some IDS Staff

- Tom Maher, Executive Director
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