

Improving Indigent Defense

Call for Comments on Improving the IDS Contract Defender System:



The North Carolina Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS) has been evaluating the current unit-based contract system with the goal of improving it. After researching many different options, IDS is developing a system called “Managed Assigned Counsel” (MAC). In this system, IDS will contract with attorneys for placement on various local appointment lists, and attorneys will be paid hourly based on the prevailing private assigned counsel (PAC) rates. Contracting attorneys will input limited case information and certify their hours worked each month into a database and IDS will pay them monthly for the previous month’s work. Contracting attorneys will have resources available to them in the form of regional defender assistance and consulting and will agree to avail themselves of these resources, attend training, and other assurances of quality as called for.

Once details are ironed out, IDS plans to implement the new system in certain pilot counties before expanding it to cover other areas. IDS intends to phase out the current unit-based contracts as they are set to expire, first on May 31, 2022 and the second set on November 30, 2022. Depending on how the implementation goes, current contracting attorneys whose contracts expire on the later date may be able to transition to the new system before then. Our goal is to have the MAC system fully in place by December 1, 2022.

In the meantime, IDS invites and welcomes input from indigent defense attorneys, both those who work within the current contract system and those who do not, so that this system can best meet the needs of attorneys, court systems, IDS, and most importantly, indigent clients. Please contact IDS Director Mary Pollard at Mary.S.Pollard@nccourts.org or IDS Defender Administrator at Susan.E.Brooks@nccourts.org if you have any comments or suggestions about the contract system. IDS will set up formal listening sessions after October 30, 2021.

IDS is committed to implementing a system that compensates attorneys fairly and promotes quality representation for clients. We hope you will assist us in this goal.

Safeguarding individual liberty and the Constitution by equipping the North Carolina public defense community with the resources it needs to achieve fair and just outcomes for clients