Juvenile Report

As required by HB 14-1032

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Office of the State Public Defender

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House Bill 14-1032 requires the Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) to report annually the following juvenile conflict information to the Judiciary Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate. The information below is based on a review FY 2025-26 cases.

1. **The number of juvenile delinquency cases for which counsel from the office is appointed.**

   The OSPD was appointed on 5,884 juvenile delinquency cases.

2. **The number of juvenile cases that involve a conflict of interest.**

   Approximately 1,638 juvenile cases involved a conflict of interest.

3. **The process of selecting, training, and supporting attorneys who represent children in juvenile delinquency court.**

   The OSPD trains all trial lawyers according to its established standards. After spending (on average) at least one year in a county court trial setting, attorneys are eligible to transfer to a juvenile docket in jurisdictions with enough juvenile case filings to support a dedicated juvenile caseload. These spots are competitive and not everyone who applies is assigned a caseload. Within 90 days of beginning to represent youth, attorneys must attend a core youth defender skills training program. This two-day program includes training by mental health professionals about adolescent brain development, adjudicative competency issues specific to youth, and other aspects of litigation unique to youth defense. This training is in addition to youth defense training presented by the local regional offices and other youth defender organizations. Since 2015, the OSPD has offered a two-day training every two years on the Guidelines established by the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth regarding children tried as adults and facing life sentences.

   The OSPD has a youth defender listserv through which practitioners can communicate and share information relevant to youth defense. The OSPD Training Directors organize other youth defense-specific trainings throughout the year.

   The annual OSPD training conference includes a youth defense training track. Youth defense social workers are placed in the eight regional offices where DYS detention facilities are located, and they work with the regional offices throughout the state to support youth defenders in their work. Each year, OSPD sends youth defenders to the Gault Center's Annual Leadership Summit, which is the only national gathering of youth defenders. This past year, OSPD sent a training director and two youth defenders to the YDAP (Youth Defense Advocacy Program) summer intensive at Georgetown University. OSPD also sent a training director to the YDAP Train the Trainers program in Missouri for certification as a YDAP trainer, which also provides the agency with access to Gault's extensive training modules and resources.

4. **The average length of time attorneys are assigned to juvenile court.**

   Many attorneys assigned to juvenile court have elected to stay permanently. Although each situation is different, OSPD estimates that attorneys who do not stay permanently in juvenile court typically handle these cases for 12-18 months.

5. **The outcome of efforts to reduce juvenile court rotations and increase opportunities for promotional advancement in salaries for attorneys in juvenile court.**

   As early as 2008, the OSPD appointed juvenile supervisors and attorneys to specific juvenile slots. There are no barriers for promotional advancement in salaries for attorneys in juvenile court. Like all OSPD employees, youth defense attorneys progress through the current step and grade system based on longevity as a Public Defender and individual performance and are eligible for open promotional opportunities.