Annual Performance Report

November 1, 2026

Office of the State Public Defender

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Colorado State Public Defender

Performance Evaluation

General Description

Mission

The Office of the Public Defender's mission is to protect and defend the rights, liberties, and dignity of those accused of crimes who cannot afford to retain counsel. We do so by providing constitutionally and statutorily mandated representation that is effective, zealous, inspired and compassionate.

> ***OSPD Enabling Legislation*:**
> *The general assembly hereby declares that the state public defender at all times shall serve his clients independently of any political considerations or private interest, provide legal services to indigent persons accused of crime that are commensurate with those available to nonindigents, and conduct the office in accordance with the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct and with the American Bar Association standards relating to the administration of criminal justice, the defense function. Section 21-1-101(1), C.R.S.*

Vision

It is OSPD's vision that every client served receives excellent legal representation through the delivery of high-quality legal services and compassionate support from a team of dedicated Public Defenders.

Description

The OSPD is a single purpose program devoted to providing effective criminal defense representation to indigent people charged with crimes unless there is a conflict of interest. Our clients are indigent people who, faced with the possibility of incarceration, cannot afford private counsel and without counsel would otherwise be denied their constitutional right to representation throughout the criminal proceedings. Attorneys, investigators, social workers, paralegals, administrative assistants and support staff are necessary to effectively represent clients as mandated by the federal and state constitutions, Colorado Revised Statutes, Colorado Court Rules, American Bar Association standards, and the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct. The OSPD system is the most efficient means of meeting these requirements.

The OSPD is an independent agency within the Judicial Branch of Colorado state government. The courts appoint the OSPD when a person qualifies for public defender services pursuant to statute, applicable case law, and Chief Justice Directives.

To support the OSPD in the representation of its FY 2026-27 projected caseload, the OSPD was appropriated $203,325,199 and approximately 1241 FTE. In addition, Senate Bill 26-149 and Senate Bill 26-115, appropriated the OSPD $699,700 and approximately 5 FTE. OPSD's FTE comprises approximately 650 attorneys, 191 investigators, 172 administrative assistants, 125 paralegals, 34 social workers, and 74 centralized management and support positions.

Priorities

In keeping with the Office's mission and vision, OSPD developed the following goals, strategies, and measures.

Goals:

1. Provide high-quality attorney services and advocacy for indigent clients in both the trial and appellate courts throughout Colorado.
2. Recruit and retain quality staff to effectively manage the workload in each Public Defender office across the state.
3. Offer excellent staff development, training, technology support, and other resources to adapt to the evolving criminal legal system and ensure our advocacy meets that available to non-indigent individuals, as mandated by our statute.

Strategies:

1. Hire a sufficient number of skilled and committed staff and keep an adequate level of experienced staff to effectively manage the assigned caseload.
2. Track and analyze trends in caseloads and adjust staffing levels.
3. Provide training to address the changing legal climate.
4. Continually evaluate administrative processes and organizational infrastructure needs such as office space, technology, and staffing.
5. Work all cases as efficiently as possible, while keeping a high quality of effective and reasonable representation.

Performance Measures

		FY 24-25 (actual)	FY 25-26 (actual)	FY 26-27 (projected)	FY 27-28 (projected)	FY 28-29 (projected)
MEASURE 1:	**Target**	**130,267**	**134,035**	**130,579**	**134,497**	**138,532**
Number of new trial court cases.	Actual	130,131	126,776			
MEASURE 2:	**Target**	**178,660**	**180,224**	**176,991**	**182,301**	**187,770**
Number of active trial court cases.	Actual	174,975	171,836			
MEASURE 3:	**Target**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Percent of actual trial court attorney staff vs. total required for closed trial court cases.	Actual	83%	83%			

		FY 24-25 (actual)	FY 25-26 (actual)	FY 26-27 (projected)	FY 27-28 (projected)	FY 28-29 (projected)
MEASURE 4:	**Target**	**500**	**500**	**500**	**500**	**500**
Number of attorney applications received.	Actual	531	607			
MEASURE 5:	**Target**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Percent of actual total attorney staff vs. total required for closed trial court cases and appellate cases.	Actual	81%	81%			
MEASURE 6:	**Target**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**
Annual rates of attrition:						
Attorneys	Actual	15%	13%			
Investigators	Actual	3%	4%			
Paralegals	Actual	12%	18%			
Administrative Assistants	Actual	13%	14%			
Total All Employees	Actual	12%	12%			
MEASURE 7:	**Target**	**70%**	**70%**	**70%**	**70%**	**70%**
Percent of experienced, fully capable staff (journey level or higher):						
Attorneys	Actual	42%	43%			
Investigators	Actual	61%	64%			
Paralegals	Actual	21%	27%			
Administrative Assistants	Actual	34%	35%			
Total All Employees	Actual	42%	44%			
MEASURE 8:	**Target**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Percent compliance with minimum standards for total staffing requirements.	Actual	82%	83%			
MEASURE 9:	**Target**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**	**12%**
Maintain established standard percentages for reasonable staff supervision, management and development.	Actual	9%	9%			
MEASURE 10:	**Target**	**497**	**511**	**467**	**481**	**481**
Number of new appellate cases.	Actual	456	492			
MEASURE 11:	**Target**	**1,669**	**1,668**	**1,919**	**1,912**	**1,903**
Number of active appellate cases.	Actual	1,670	1,742			

		FY 24-25 (actual)	FY 25-26 (actual)	FY 26-27 (projected)	FY 27-28 (projected)	FY 28-29 (projected)
MEASURE 12:	**Target**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Percent of actual appellate attorney staff vs. total required for appellate cases awaiting filing of initial brief.	Actual	60%	58%			
MEASURE 13:	**Target**	**129,020**	**132,564**	**132,503**	**136,478**	**140,573**
Number of trial court cases closed.	Actual	128,704	128,644			
MEASURE 14:	**Target**	**314**	**327**	**271**	**271**	**271**
Days of training provided.	Actual	344	244			
MEASURE 15:	**Target**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**	**20**
Number of CLE credits provided to all attorneys.	Actual	23	32			
MEASURE 16:	**Target**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**
Hours of ethics training provided, focusing on Colorado criminal law.	Actual	3	7.4			
MEASURE 17:	**Target**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**15**
Number of administrative processes and organizational infrastructure evaluations performed.	Actual	18	16			
MEASURE 18:	**Target**	**358**	**355**	**355**	**355**	**355**
Number of appellate cases for which an Opening Brief has been filed.	Actual	354	358			
MEASURE 19:	**Target**	**589**	**574**	**726**	**762**	**795**
Number of backlogged appellate cases.	Actual	585	702			