



Lake County Public Defender

February 27, 2024

**Joy Gossman
Public Defender**

Department Overview



Primary Functions:

Provide legal representation to:

- **Indigent accused—adults and juveniles, charged with criminal offenses**
- **Parents accused of the abuse, neglect, dependency of children**
- **Respondents to Mental Health/Medication petitions**
- **Sexually Violent and Sexually Dangerous Persons Petitions**
- **Post-Conviction Petitioners**
- **Guardian Ad Litem to abused, neglected, dependent minors & those pending adoption**

Department Overview

The Public Defender's Office staffs 15 courtrooms and handles approximately 25 court calls daily. This includes:

- **5 Felony courtrooms (Staffed 5 days/week)**
- **6 Misdemeanor/Traffic courtrooms (Staffed 5 days/week)**
- **1 First Appearance courtroom (Staffed 7 days/week)**
- **1 Detention courtroom (staffed 5 days/week)**
- **2 Juvenile courtrooms (Staffed 6 days/week)**
- **1 Specialty & Fitness courtroom (Staffed 4-5 days/week)**

	2022	2023
New Case Appointments:	5764	7403
Supplemental Appointments:	1411	1625

- **Approximately 17.5% increase in new case appointments**
- **Change in case management system to E Defender has impacted statistics. We will continue to work to address deficiencies.**

Chief Public Defender

Supervisors:

- **Felony**
- **Traffic/Misdemeanor**
- **Juvenile—Delinquency/Parent**
- **Juvenile—GAL**
- **Special Defense/Training/Conflicts**
- **Investigations**
- **Support Staff**

Staff:

- **13 Felony Attorneys (1 vacant)**
- **14 Misdemeanor/Traffic Attorneys (2 vacant)**
- **2 Guardian Ad Litem Attorneys**
- **2 Delinquency/Parent Attorneys**
- **2 Specialty Court Attorneys**
- **2 Investigators**
- **1 Immigration Analyst**
- **2 Social Workers**
- **2 GAL Investigators**
- **7 Support Staff**
- **1 Paralegal**

2024 Department Budget



\$6,602,358

- **Approximately 89% of budget is related to personnel costs**
- **100% funded by the County**
- **Portion of Public Defender salary reimbursed by the State**
- **Little revenue generated by imposition of Public Defender Fees**

Accomplishments in the Previous 12 Months:

- **Transitioned back to in-person court appearances, and integrated ZOOM appearances when appropriate**
- **Created processes to meet demands of implementation of SAFE-T Act**
- **Implemented new case management system—E-Defender**
- **Continue to refer clients to Specialty Court programs to address substance abuse and mental health issues and potentially reduce recidivism**
- **Implemented procedures to assure effective attorney/client communications with inmates housed in McHenry County Jail**

Upcoming Challenges

- **Recruitment and Retention of Attorneys**
 - Inability to recruit qualified attorneys (3 vacancies currently)
 - Loss of staff due to lack of competitive salaries
- **Increased workloads**
 - Increased use of body cam video
 - Increase in number of appointments for violent and complex crimes
- **Digital Discovery Retention**
 - Need to protect confidentiality of client files



Questions?