



Public Defense

Objective:

Ensure fair and accessible justice systems

Strategy:

Ensure the availability of public defenders to those that need them

Why is this strategy important?

Both the U.S. and Washington State constitutions grant all individuals the right to a defense attorney even if they cannot afford one. Since 1970, King County has provided publicly financed legal services for individuals with low/no income. Anyone facing a criminal charge, civil commitment, or a dependency proceeding is entitled to a public defender, as are children facing contempt of court in truancy proceedings.

How is our performance?

Timely access to an attorney is a key component of quality legal representation. Each year, the Office of Public Defense (OPD) assigns over 25,000 cases determined as eligible for representation.

For in-custody (the person charged is being held in jail) felony cases, OPD has set a standard of assigning cases to a contracted public defense agency or assigned counsel within one day of receiving notification of the case. For the past four years, OPD has met this target, averaging 0.79 days between the time it receives notification of a felony case to the time the case was assigned. For 2011, this average was 0.86.

Following the performance guidelines set by the Washington State Bar Association, OPD also measures the time between when the case is assigned to an agency and when the agency first contacts the client. For in-custody cases, contract agencies must contact clients within one business day of being assigned to the case. In out-of-custody cases (the person charged is out in the community), contact must be made within five business days of receiving the case. In 2011, the contracted public defense agencies met both of these targets in 94 percent of all cases. Over the past four years, the contracted public defense agencies met this target an average of 91 percent annually.

How is our performance?

If you or someone you know needs an attorney and can't afford one you can go to any of OPD Screening Centers to see if you or they qualify for a public defender. Locations are available on the link below.

Moving forward

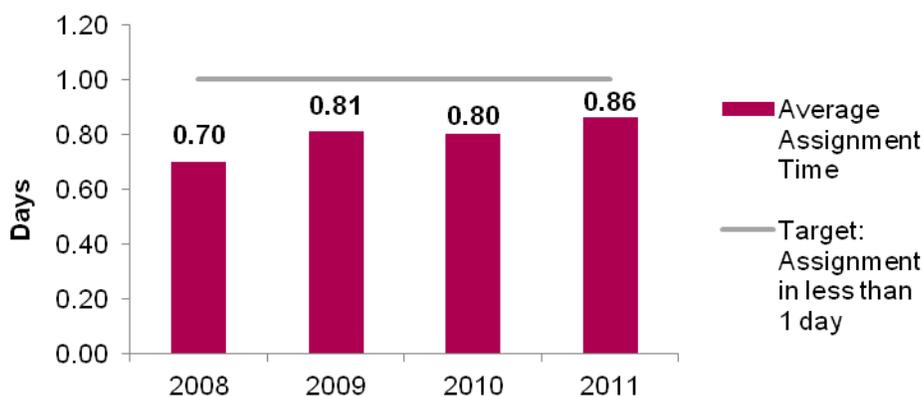
On July 30, 2012, King County Executive Dow Constantine named Dave Chapman as the Director of the Office of Public Defense. Chapman brings 30 years of diverse legal experience and is respected by attorneys and judges alike. With a new director, the Office of Public Defense is looking forward to enhancing their strategic direction and strengthening its relationships across the justice system.

Related Links

[King County Office of Public Defense](#)

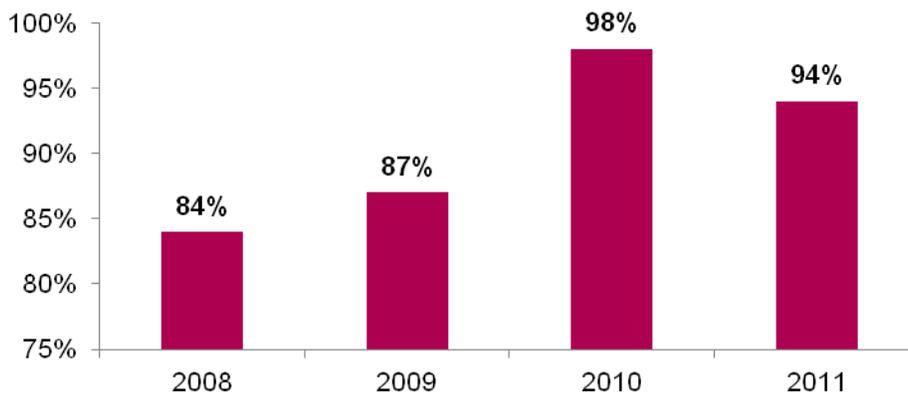
Charts and Maps

Average time to assign in-jail felony case to an attorney



Data from King County Office of the Public Defender

Proportion of Defendants Contacted within 1 or 5 Days by Attorney



Data from King County Office of the Public Defender