



Damon L. Preston, Public Advocate

Melanie Lowe, Deputy Public Advocate



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCACY

**PUBLIC DEFENDERS**

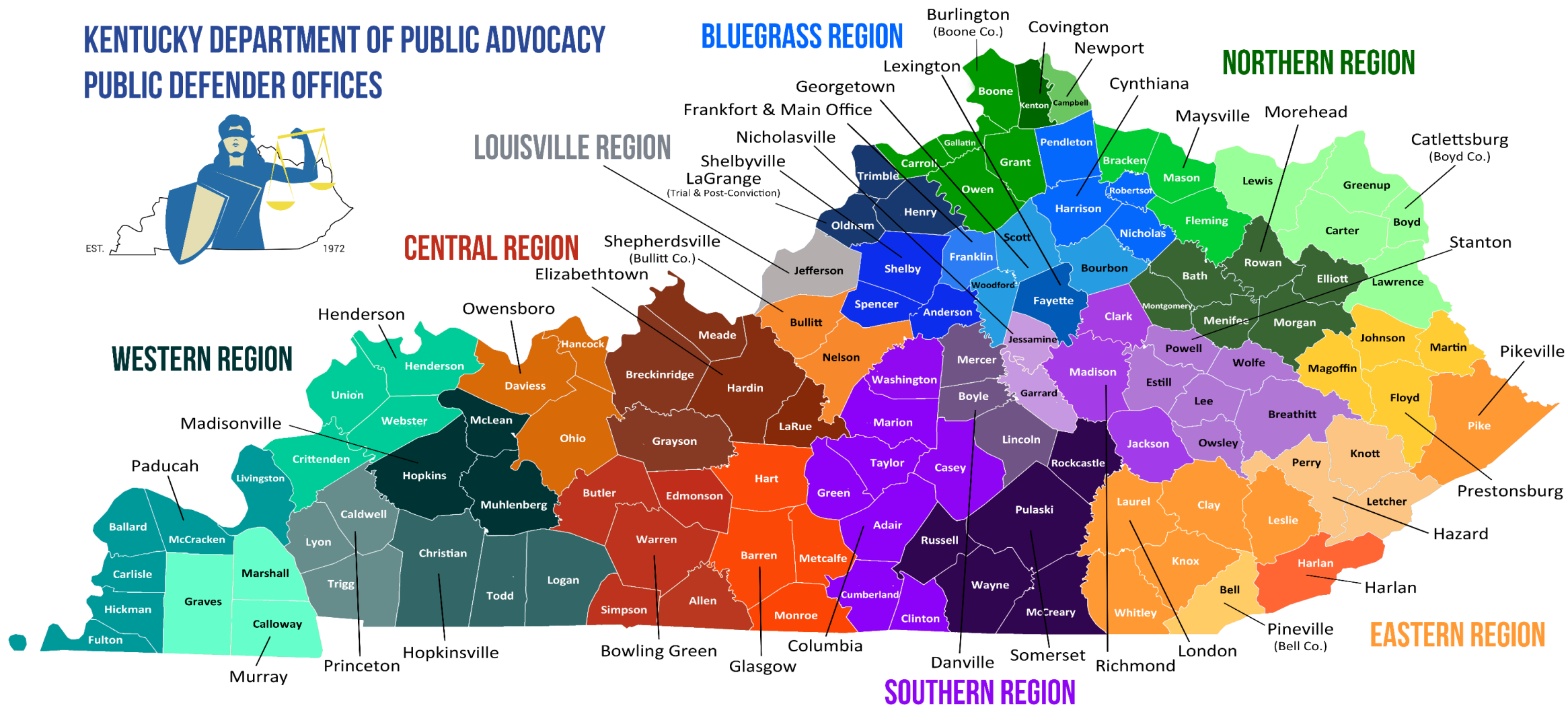
- The Value of Kentucky's Public Defense System
- Update on Agency Personnel and Challenges
- Balanced Justice: Defender Reform Plan of 2026
- Other Challenges and Expected Legislation

# Public Advocacy is a Public Service

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- Constitutional Obligation
- Protect and improve integrity in the justice system
- Advance the law through litigation
- Develop expertise and wealth of experience
- Provide a valuable perspective in criminal policy discussions
- Constituent services







## DPA BY THE NUMBERS

**\$87,316,301**

Personnel Expenses

**\$12,569,374**

Operating Expenses

**\$640**

Funding Per  
New Trial Case

**130,600**

Total New Trial Cases

**341.6**

New Cases  
Per Trial Attorney

**\$1,031**

Funding Per  
Conflict Case

**6,498**

Cases Assigned to  
Contract Attorneys

**170**

Private Attorneys  
Assigned to DPA Cases

**5,028**

Alternative Sentencing  
Plans Presented to Courts  
by ASWs

**3,378**

Clients Not Incarcerated  
After ASW Plan Approved  
by Court

**\$57,345,435**

Potential State Savings from  
Approved Plans in First Year

**65** Clients Obtained Post-Trial Relief,  
Potentially Saving **511** Years of Prison Time





Amy Hannah  
Manager  
Louisville DPA Trial Branch





# PUBLIC ADVOCACY

## ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING WORKER PROGRAM





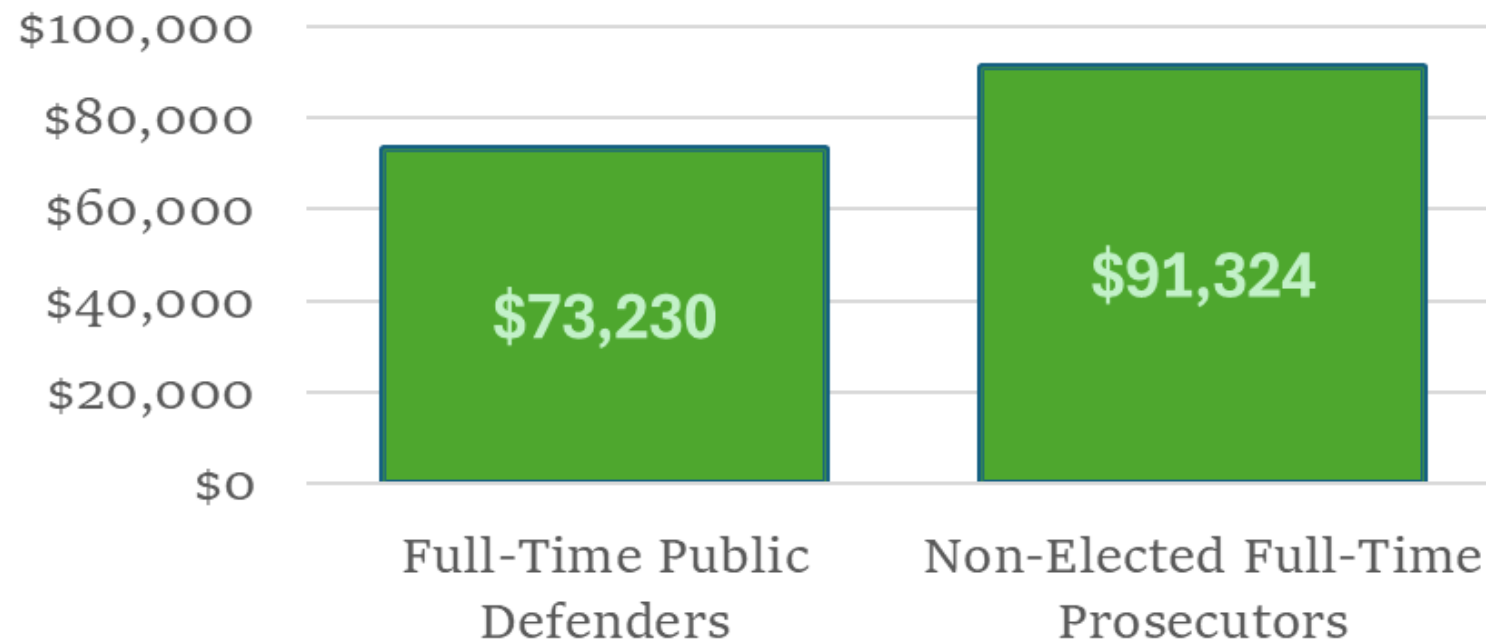
# Personnel Challenge: Attorney Turnover



DPA Attorney and Non-Attorney Turnover Rate  
2024 & 2025 (Annualized)

	Year	Separations	Turnover Rate	Median Service Time Before Separation
Attorneys	2025	80	20%	17 months
	2024	64	20%	15 months
Non-Attorneys	2025	31	10%	25 months
	2024	27	11%	52 months

The Average Unelected Prosecutor is Paid  
25% More than the  
Average Public Defender





# Out-of-State Recruiting

Event Date	Law School
9/8/2025	Indiana University Bloomington
9/9/2025	Indiana University Indianapolis
9/10/2025	University of Notre Dame, School of Law
9/9/2025	Wake Forest University, Wake Forest Law
9/10/2025	Elon University School of Law, Elon Law
9/11/2025	North Carolina Central University, School of Law
9/12/2025	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
9/15/2025	University of Georgia, School of Law
9/16/2025	Mercer University, School of Law
9/17/2025	Georgia State University, College of Law
9/18/2025	Emory University, Emory Law
9/19/2025	Atlanta's John Marshall Law School
9/16/2025	Samford University, Cumberland School of Law
9/17/2025	Faulkner University, Jones School of Law
9/18/2025	Mississippi College, School of Law
9/19/2025	The University of Mississippi, School of Law

9/22/2025	Loyola University Chicago, School of Law
9/23/2025	DePaul University, College of Law (DePaul Law)
9/24/2025	Northwestern University, Pritzker School of Law
9/25/2025	Illinois Tech, Chicago-Kent College of Law
9/22/2025	Liberty University, School of Law
9/23/2025	University of Virginia, School of Law
9/24/2025	William & Mary Law School
9/25/2025	University of Richmond, School of Law
9/22/2025	Baylor University, School of Law
9/23/2025	The University of Texas at Austin, School of Law
9/24/2025	Texas Southern University, Thurgood Marshall
9/25/2025	South Texas College of Law, Houston
9/23/2025	Saint Louis University, School of Law
9/24/2025	Washington University, WashU Law
9/25/2025	Southern Illinois University, Simmons Law School
9/29/2025	University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
9/30/2025	University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Bowen
10/1/2025	The University of Memphis, Humphreys School of Law
10/6/2025	Ohio Northern University, Pettit College of Law
10/7/2025	The University of Toledo, College of Law
10/8/2025	Cooley Law School
10/9/2025	Michigan State University, College of Law
10/10/2025	The University of Michigan Law School, Michigan Law





# Balanced Justice: Defender Reform Plan of 2026

## **Balanced Justice: Defender Reform Plan of 2026 (Budget)**

*A strategic plan to stabilize Kentucky's public defender system, retain experienced advocates, and ensure a fair and balanced justice system for all*

- 1. Professional Defender Compensation**

Salary Increases for Public Defenders to Stabilize Court Staffing and Services

- 2. Defender Recruitment and Retention Program**

Fund a Dedicated and Transparent Recruiting and Retention Program

- 3. Circuit Advocates**

Establish Twenty-One (21) Experienced Attorney Positions to Strengthen Unserved Circuits

- 4. Paralegal Services to Improve Efficiency and Stability**

Fund a Paralegal in each DPA Office

- 5. Ethical and Fiscally Responsible Contract System for Conflict Cases**

Fund Essential Contracts and Court Plans

- 6. Evolving Technological Resources**

Fund Necessary Technology and Supporting Personnel

## **Balanced Justice: Defender Reform Plan of 2026 (Organizational)**

*A strategic plan to stabilize Kentucky's public defender system, retain experienced advocates, and ensure a fair and balanced justice system for all*

### **1. Focus DPA Representation on Criminal Prosecutions**

Authorize appointment of private counsel in:

- a. Adult Family Court or Civil Court Contempt actions
- b. Involuntary Hospitalization (KRS Chapter 202A)
- c. Court-Ordered Assisted Outpatient Treatment (*Tim's Law*)
- d. Involuntary Treatment for Substance Use Disorder (*Casey's Law*)

### **2. Define Circuit Advocates**

Attorneys who are responsible for ensuring adequate legal services in a judicial circuit

### **3. Authority to Establish Attorney Compensation with Flexibility**

Allow the Public Advocate, not the Personnel Cabinet, to set defender pay rates within DPA's budget

### **4. Clarify the Prohibition on Acceptance of Private Fees by Defenders**

Conflict attorneys were inadvertently removed in a 2023 amendment.

### **5. Language Cleanup**

Various non-policy semantic changes to reflect current practices (ex. "Attorneys providing representation under this chapter" ensures that conflict attorneys are covered by statutes)



# Other Challenges and Expected Legislation



# Criminal Law Legislation

- DPA is ready and willing to collaborate on criminal justice policy.
- Strengthening Public Defense is criminal justice reform without changing the law.

When cases are properly defended, the law works as you intend it to work.


## USE OF VIDEOCONFERENCING IN THE CIRCUIT COURTS

### 885.50 Statement of intent.

(1) It is the intent of the Supreme Court that videoconferencing technology be available for use in the circuit courts of Wisconsin to the greatest extent possible consistent with the limitations of the technology, the rights of litigants and other participants in matters before the courts, and the need to preserve the fairness, dignity, solemnity, and decorum of court proceedings. Further, it is the intent of the Supreme Court that circuit court judges be vested with the discretion to determine the manner and extent of the use of videoconferencing technology, except as specifically set forth in this subchapter.

(2) In declaring this intent, the Supreme Court finds that careful use of this evolving technology can make proceedings in the circuit courts more efficient and less expensive to the public and the participants without compromising the fairness, dignity, solemnity, and decorum of these proceedings. The Supreme Court further finds that an open-ended approach to the incorporation of this technology into the court system under the supervision and control of judges, subject to the limitations and guidance set forth in this subchapter, will most rapidly realize the benefits of videoconferencing for all concerned.

(3) In declaring this intent, the Supreme Court further finds that improper use of videoconferencing technology, or use in situations in which the technical and operational standards set forth in this subchapter are not met, can result in abridgement of fundamental rights of litigants, crime victims, and the public, unfair shifting of costs, and loss of the fairness, dignity, solemnity, and decorum of court proceedings that is essential to the proper administration of justice.



It is the intent of the Supreme Court that videoconferencing technology be available for use in the circuit courts of Wisconsin to the greatest extent possible consistent with the limitations of the technology, the rights of litigants and other participants in matters before the courts, and the need to preserve the fairness, dignity, solemnity, and decorum of court proceedings.



ATTORNEYS ARE  
INVASIVELY SEARCHED

OR REQUIRED  
TO SUBMIT TO A  
FULL BODY SCAN,  
JUST TO DO THEIR JOBS





Making a Difference  
in an Often-Thankless Job



## Fall 2025 Hiring Class

Name	Position	Office	Law School
Adams, Ashton	Law Clerk	Hopkinsville	Northern Kentucky University
Allen, Ren	Staff Attorney I	Columbia	Mississippi College of Law
Arnold, Chelsea	Staff Attorney I	Owensboro	Northern Kentucky University
Asiedu, Akosua	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 4	University of Toledo
Bakhit, Marcos	Law Clerk	Hopkinsville	University of Connecticut
Bohm, Cinnamon	Staff Attorney I	Boyd County	University of Massachusetts
Boston, Emily	Staff Attorney I	Louisville Team 5	University of Louisville
Boyce, Andrew	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 2	University of Louisville
Cammack, Alexis	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 5	University of Louisville
Carr, Taylor	Staff Attorney I	Pikeville	University of Toledo
Champeau, Michele	Law Clerk	Bowling Green South	West Virginia University
Cox, Nathan	Staff Attorney I	Cynthiana	University of Kentucky
Devins, Rebecca	Staff Attorney I	Owensboro	University of Kentucky
Fioravante, Angelo	Staff Attorney I	Owensboro	West Virginia University
Fisher, William	Staff Attorney I	Louisville Team 2	University of Louisville
Gaither, Erica	Law Clerk	LaGrange Post-Conviction	Arizona State University
Garner, Kaleb	Law Clerk	London	University of Arkansas - Bowen
Guthier, Davis	Law Clerk	Stanton	Northern Kentucky University
Hall, Elizabeth	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 4	University of Louisville
Harrington, Mallory	Staff Attorney I	Murray	University of Louisville
Jackson, Sara	Staff Attorney I	Frankfort	Northern Kentucky University
Kirsch, Gabe	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 3	University of California Irvine
Kubash, Emma	Law Clerk	Elizabethtown	University of Louisville
LeGro, Conner	Law Clerk	Harlan	Lincoln Memorial University
Lemberg, Han	Staff Attorney I	Hazard	University of Tennessee
Longfellow, Michael	Law Clerk	Elizabethtown	Emory University
McCourt, Conner	Staff Attorney I	Elizabethtown	University of Kentucky
Miracle, Zachary	Law Clerk	Harlan	Appalachian School of Law
Neal, John "Hank"	Staff Attorney I	Shelbyville	University of Louisville
Nelson, Xavier	Law Clerk	Louisville Team 2	University of Kentucky
Neyenhaus, Janna	Staff Attorney I	Boone County	Northern Kentucky University
Novak, Timothy	Law Clerk	Morehead	University of Cincinnati



O'Boyle, Shea	Staff Attorney I	Elizabethtown	University of Louisville
Poplin, Lauren	Law Clerk	Danville	Northern Kentucky University
Resendez, Katherine	Staff Attorney I	LaGrange	University of Louisville
Risner, Nathaniel	Staff Attorney I	Elizabethtown	University of Louisville
Schaller, Patrick	Law Clerk	Owensboro	George Washington University
Sholar, Jean	Staff Attorney I	Hopkinsville	Lincoln Memorial University
Shugars, Dakota	Staff Attorney I	Paducah	University of Kentucky
Sieczka, Sean	Law Clerk	Murray	Pepperdine
Spencer, Courtney	Staff Attorney I	Maysville	University of Cincinnati
Terry, Preiss	Law Clerk	Lexington North	University of Kentucky
Truitt, Bailey	Law Clerk	CTB East	University of Kentucky
Tuttle, Rezin	Law Clerk	Elizabethtown	University of Louisville
Vandygriff, Nathaniel	Law Clerk	Paducah	Southern Illinois University
Williams, Summer	Staff Attorney I	Paducah	Northern Kentucky University



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