



**WASHINGTON STATE  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC DEFENSE**

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On May 21, 2025, Governor Bob Ferguson signed into law the state's operating budget ([ESSB 5167](#)), marking a historic milestone for Washington's public defense system. This budget includes the first substantial increase to the Office of Public Defense's (OPD) Public Defense Improvement grant program since 2008 and the largest increase since the program's inception.

Previously funded at approximately \$6.8 million annually, the Public Defense Improvement Program now has \$13.6 million in annual disbursements to counties and cities. Under the new budget, counties will receive \$11,910,500 annually, while cities will receive \$1,689,500—significantly increasing the previous allocations of \$5,821,675 and \$1,043,275, respectively. Estimated county disbursements can be found below. Cities are welcome and encouraged to apply for funds for public defense improvements in their jurisdictions

OPD expresses its deep appreciation to the Legislature and Governor Ferguson for recognizing the growing challenges within the state's public defense systems. Amid significant budget constraints, this increase represents a crucial step toward improving access to adequate legal defense for indigent individuals across Washington. However, OPD acknowledges that more work remains to fully address the ongoing deficiencies in public defense.

During the legislative session, OPD had requested that Public Defense Improvement funding be raised to \$40 million annually to meet the critical needs of public defense systems statewide. While pleased with the increased investment, OPD remains committed to advocating for continued and additional funding in future legislative sessions to ensure public defense resources align with growing workloads and rising costs.

Public Defense Improvement grants are available to qualifying cities and counties as supplemental funding to bolster existing public defense budgets. To qualify, jurisdictions must submit applications to OPD detailing their public defense expenditures, caseload numbers, and efforts to meet Washington State Bar Association Standards for Indigent Defense – or show that funds are used to make appreciable, demonstrable improvements in the delivery of public defense services.

Applications for Public Defense Improvement grant funding for counties and cities will be available in early June. Applications will be posted at [Chapter 10.101 RCW County and City Public Defense Improvement Funds | Office of Public Defense](#)

For any questions regarding Public Defense Improvement grants, please contact Geoffrey Hulsey at [geoffrey.hulsey@opd.wa.gov](mailto:geoffrey.hulsey@opd.wa.gov) or George Yeannakis at [george.yeannakis@opd.wa.gov](mailto:george.yeannakis@opd.wa.gov).

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## ***Estimated State Funding Distribution to Counties for Calendar Year 2026***

<b>County</b>	<b>2024 OFM Population Estimate*</b>	<b>2024 Superior Court Filings**</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Adams	21,475	143	\$57,533
Asotin	22,725	150	\$59,591
Benton	217,850	1,152	\$365,433
Chelan	82,300	461	\$153,830
Clallam	78,550	329	\$128,834
Clark	536,300	3,401	\$968,645
Columbia	3,975	51	\$29,741
Cowlitz	113,900	977	\$263,343
Douglas	45,150	198	\$83,352
Ferry	7,350	23	\$27,344
Franklin	102,300	582	\$188,281
Garfield	2,325	4	\$20,622
Grant	105,300	506	\$177,483
Grays Harbor	77,400	448	\$148,212
Island	88,650	212	\$116,030
Jefferson	33,700	111	\$60,623
King	2,378,100	5,169 <sup>†</sup>	\$2,551,509
Kitsap	286,100	994	\$386,186
Kittitas	48,600	320	\$106,443
Klickitat	23,450	70	\$46,530
Lewis	84,950	831	\$218,418
Lincoln	11,300	45	\$33,827
Mason	67,475	343	\$123,493
Okanogan	43,200	258	\$92,168
Pacific	23,950	90	\$50,270
Pend Oreille	13,850	78	\$41,199
Pierce	952,600	3,444	\$1,265,945
San Juan	18,475	31	\$36,451
Skagit	133,300	996	\$280,079
Skamania	12,075	49	\$35,045
Snohomish	867,100	1,534	\$882,499
Spokane	559,400	3,991	\$1,084,785
Stevens	47,650	416	\$122,061
Thurston	307,000	1,610	\$505,202
Wahkiakum	4,550	18	\$24,546
Walla Walla	63,375	382	\$127,250
Whatcom	238,000	1,486	\$436,108
Whitman	48,750	200	\$86,199
Yakima	263,200	1,909	\$525,392

\*Washington Office of Financial Management, April 1, 2024 Official Population Estimates  
[https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/april1/ofm\\_april1\\_population\\_final.pdf](https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/april1/ofm_april1_population_final.pdf)

\*\*Criminal Cases Filed in Superior Court 2024, Caseloads of the Courts of Washington  
<https://www.courts.wa.gov/caseload/content/archive/superior/Annual/2024.pdf>

<sup>†</sup> King County Criminal Cases Filed, [King County Superior Court 2024 Annual Statistical Report.pdf](https://www.kingcounty.gov/departments/criminal-justice/annual-statistical-report/2024-annual-statistical-report.pdf)