



**WASHINGTON STATE
OFFICE OF PUBLIC DEFENSE**

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APPLICANT POOL

The Washington State Office of Public Defense Parent Representation Program invites attorneys and recent law school graduates to submit an application to add to our applicant pool for contracts for future openings. The Washington State Supreme Court recently approved a recommendation to lower caseload standards for family defense attorneys. Starting July 1, 2026, the maximum number of clients a family defense attorney can be appointed to at one time is no more than 45 clients and no more than 60 cases. By July 1, 2028, caseloads will be reduced to no more than 35 clients at one time and no more than 40 cases.

What does 60 and 40 cases mean? Attorneys cannot have more than 45 clients (July 2026) and 35 (July 2028). However, a client may have more than one family defense case pending at the same time. For example, in addition to a dependency case, the state could file a termination or guardianship case while the dependency is pending. Both the dependency, termination, and guardianship case each count as one case toward the 60 or 45 cases.

Currently the maximum case load for a full-time attorney is capped at 65 cases. The current annual compensation for a full-time contract is \$206,364. Part-time attorney contract compensation is pro-rated based on a percentage of a full-time case load.

Support: OPD provides support to contracted attorneys/agencies by providing Westlaw, access to Judicial Information System (JIS), access to funds for expert services pursuant to OPD's expert services policy, as well as access to technical support from experienced OPD staff. OPD provides social service professionals who contract independently with OPD to assist attorneys on cases and provide support for parents. In addition, OPD provides access to a virtual academy for contractors, a contractor online toolbox that includes a brief bank, prior training materials, and access to forms. OPD contractors can sign up for the dependency list serve to gain access to a wealth of knowledge and experience of dependency attorneys statewide.

Training: While previous experience handling dependency and termination cases is a desired qualification, **ALL** interested attorneys, agencies, or firms who have a desire to represent parents are encouraged to apply. OPD has a virtual academy and can provide mentoring and training to attorneys, firms, or agencies we contract with. OPD also coordinates and hosts a number of CLEs annually to ensure contractors can meet contractual training requirements. OPD offers some scholarships for state and national trainings.

Paid Family Medical Leave: PFML often is available to employees of our contractors (including private law firms). PFML program includes an opt-in for self-employed people such as our solo practice contractors. More information can be found at the following link <https://paidleave.wa.gov/elective-coverage/>

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Public Loan Forgiveness: Contractors with OPD qualify under the federal Public Loan Forgiveness Program. Contractors can submit the appropriate form to their managing attorney annually for verification of employment. More information on PSLF can be found here <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service>

Qualifications

The following qualifications are required:

- Licensed member of good standing with the Washington State Bar at the time the contract commences.
- Ability to meet Washington State Supreme Court Standards for Indigent Defense.
- A demonstrated commitment to parents' rights, indigent defense, and social justice issues.
- Experience or interest in how race, gender, national origin, disability, and class intersect to create disparities for individuals and families experiencing state intervention in their lives and a willingness to challenge the state when it exists.
- Experience and/or ability to provide representation with energy, enthusiasm and a commitment to trauma-informed, anti-racist, intersectional, non-judgmental, and truly holistic advocacy throughout the case.
- Familiarity with or the capacity to become familiar with RCW 13.34 and court rules pertaining to dependency and termination cases.
- Be responsive to, and communicate clearly with, clients who are often under great stress.
- Collaborate and develop working relationships with other parties and all dependency court partners.
- Experience in the court for which you are interested is preferred, but not required.

Application Procedure

If you would like additional information, please feel free to call OPD and speak with one of our parent representation program managing attorneys at 360-586-3164. If you would like to submit an application to keep on file for future openings, please email a resume to the email below. Please indicate which county or counties you are interested in contracting in.

Email Materials to:

parentsreadmin@opd.wa.gov

Subject line: Applicant Pool

Future contracts are contingent on funding from the state legislature. OPD reserves the right to amend this notice and reserves the right to refrain from contracting with any and all applicants. This notice does not obligate the state of Washington or OPD to contract for the services specified here.

The Washington State Office of Public Defense vigorously pursues diversity in the work force. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, and military veterans are encouraged to apply.