



Office of the State Public Defender  
Indigent Defense Improvement Division

# 2024 Annual Report

Indigent Defense Improvement Division



# Who We Are

## Office of the State Public Defender

The Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD) provides unwavering advocacy for the underrepresented and empowers the broader defense community to ensure effective representation for all Californians. Originally established in 1976 to provide high-quality representation in capital appeals, OSPD has since expanded its mission to include strengthening and supporting public defense systems statewide.

## Indigent Defense Improvement Division

The Indigent Defense Improvement Division (IDID), a part of OSPD, is dedicated to protecting the rights and safeguarding the liberty of all Californians. We advance this mission by supporting indigent defense providers with expanded access to resources, providing high-quality training and support for defenders, and offering technical assistance to develop and strengthen local defense systems in collaboration with defenders, defense leaders, and community stakeholders.

While IDID does not provide direct client services, the attorneys, staff, and partners who work with IDID strive to center those impacted by the criminal legal system at the heart of their work. We recognize the humanity of those impacted as individuals with their own stories, struggles, and aspirations – never merely case files or statistics.

# What We Do

IDID supports and strengthens public defense throughout California through capacity building, training, and research. Our Capacity Building Team works collaboratively with the public defense community, local stakeholders, and policymakers to improve systems through technical assistance and resource development. The Training Team delivers high-quality trainings – both in-person and virtually – to defenders and defense team members across California. Our Research Team and Research Data Specialist work to strengthen data collection and analysis to improve public defense systems statewide.

These efforts reflect IDID's commitment to rethinking public defense in California and ensuring a continuous evolution and improvement in the quality of legal representation.

Highlights of the work accomplished by IDID in 2024 include:

# Comprehensive County Engagement

A cornerstone of IDID's work is its deep engagement with counties across California to assess, strengthen, and support local indigent defense systems. These efforts are rooted in collaboration, responsiveness to local needs, and a commitment to improving local systems in line with state and national standards.

## County Defense System Evaluations

At the invitation of leaders in Kings County and San Benito County, IDID conducted comprehensive evaluations of their indigent defense systems. These requests reflect a growing recognition among counties that meaningful reform begins with a clear, data-driven understanding of current practices.

Each evaluation included:

- Watching court to assess the system's strengths and challenges.
- Comparative analysis of the system's key features against national standards and best practices for public defense.
- Data collection and analysis focused on caseloads, funding structures, and other metrics.
- Interviews with key criminal legal system stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, defenders, system impacted people, and county officials.

Consumer surveys designed to capture the experiences and perspectives of people directly impacted by the criminal legal system. Individual reports were presented to the respective Board of Supervisors in each county. These reports identified systemic strengths and weaknesses, with particular attention to structural issues embedded in contract-based indigent defense systems, and provided actionable recommendations for improvements.

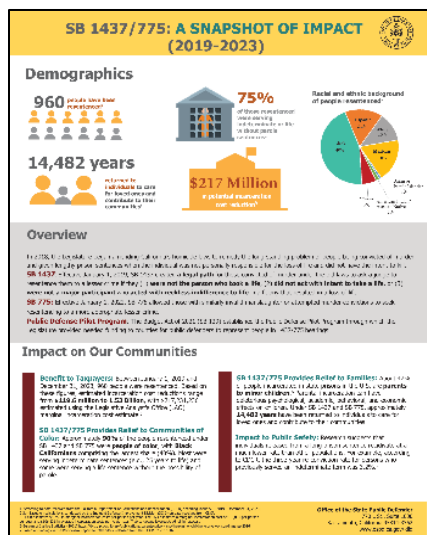
## Building Connections and Sharing Solutions

IDID facilitated quarterly statewide meetings to foster collaboration and share actionable implementation items between county leaders, including county administrators, county counsel, and panel leaders. Topics included:

- Overview of Senate Bill 2483.
- Training resources available to court-appointed counsel.
- Understanding and utilizing Public Service Loan Forgiveness.
- Strategies for addressing attorney and staff recruitment challenges.
- Opportunities to use opioid settlement funds to strengthen public defense services.

## Making Data Accessible and Actionable

IDID published several dashboards pertaining to criminal legal system staffing and budgetary data as a resource for counties. The dashboards include jail and prison incarceration rates for each county and incorporate select metrics from the Judicial Council's annual report on criminal case filings and dispositions. These dashboards are available to the public at [Data and Research: Public Defense Services Design & Funding](#).



In addition to data dashboards, OSPD gathered and analyzed data on key criminal legal system reforms, including a fact sheet summarizing outcomes under Senate Bills 1437 and 775 as of December 31, 2023. This resource highlighted not only the number of individuals who had been resentenced under the relevant changes in the law, but also the broader impact of these reforms – including potential cost benefits for California taxpayers and the successful reintegration of individuals into their families and communities.

## Supporting Rural Defender Offices

As part of our ongoing efforts to support rural public defender offices, IDID continued its summer internship program for law students. The Rural Defender Summer Internship Program is designed to strengthen the public defense pipeline by placing a limited number of summer interns in rural public defender offices. In summer 2024, students were placed in El Dorado, Nevada, Siskiyou, and Tuolumne counties.

The team also hosted a webinar: *The Road Less Traveled*. The event was designed to encourage students, recent law school graduates, and practicing attorneys to consider careers in rural public defense. The event featured speakers from Nevada, Imperial, and Siskiyou counties and highlighted the unique opportunities and critical need for defenders in these communities.

**THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED:**  
Why you should consider becoming a rural public defender

Join us for a webinar  
WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 28, 2024  
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEED FOR RURAL PUBLIC DEFENDERS](#)

Are you interested in becoming a public defender? Do you want to make a huge difference in a smaller community? Come hear from rural Public Defender Chiefs about why you should consider working in a place that has substantial needs and beautiful surroundings.

This webinar is open to anyone considering a career in rural public defense: undergraduate students, law students, recent law school graduates, post-bars and current attorneys.

**Office of the State Public Defender**

**Keri Klein**  
Public Defender  
Nevada County

**Ben Salorio**  
Public Defender  
Imperial County

**Lael Kayfetz**  
Public Defender  
Siskiyou County

# Direct Support for Defenders

## Case Consultations

The team provided one-on-one case consultations for defenders seeking support in complex areas of law. These consultations offered tailored guidance on topics such as litigation under the Racial Justice Act, effective *voir dire* strategies, post-conviction litigation, representation of youth in juvenile court, family defense, and CARE Court.

## Webinars on Emerging Practice Areas

In 2024, IDID presented more than 60 webinars covering a wide range of topics, reflecting a commitment to providing timely, practical support to California defenders. Each webinar had an average of 132 attendees, comprised of attorneys, investigators, social workers, and other members of the defense community from across the state. Participants benefited from instruction and coaching from experienced litigators and subject matter experts and earned Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) credits for their participation.

IDID training events were consistently well-received by participants:

- 98% of attendees reported that IDID training programs were helpful in strengthening advocacy for indigent defenders.
- 76% of attendees described the training as very helpful or extremely helpful.
- Instructors received an overall effectiveness average rating of 4.72 out of 5.



## Feedback from IDID Webinars

*IDID programs are always so informative, engaging, and interesting.*

– Participant, Trial Practice webinar

*The trainings offered by the Indigent Defense Improvement Division are very informative and presented in a professional manner. Keep up the great work! Thank you!*

– Participant, RJA webinar

*As liaison to our County's Board of Supervisors' legislative arm, this training will help me stay informed and up-to-date on proposed bills pending in the assembly and senate that may affect our clients.*

– Participant, Legislative Tracking meet-up

## Family Court Assistance for Defenders


In collaboration with Partners for Justice, IDID hosted a dedicated family law attorney. This lawyer assisted public defenders and their clients with cases that cross-over between criminal and family courts. Support included individual case consultations to public defender attorneys in five counties and consultations with individuals representing themselves in family court who are also facing criminal charges.

The team also developed written resources including, *A Guide to Family Courts for Clients of California's Public Defender Offices* and *Cheat Sheet: Family Defense Screening at Arraignments* and provided live and virtual trainings to public defenders working at the intersection of criminal and family law.

# Public Defense Resources

IDID prioritized the creation of practical, accessible resources designed to meet the real-world needs of defenders, county leaders, and system impacted individuals. Among the key resources developed, released, or updated in 2024:

- [Resentencing under \*People v. Heard\*](#)
- [Transitioning to a Public Defender Office](#)
- [Resource Guide for Public Defense Recruitment](#)
- [Utilizing Social Workers in Public Defense in California](#)
- [Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness for California Defenders](#)
- [Using Opioid Settlement Funds in County Public Defense Systems](#)
- [California Standards for Contract and Panel Defense Systems](#) and [Implementation Guide](#)


**Office of the State Public Defender**  
Indigent Defense Improvement Division

## Utilizing Social Workers in Public Defense in California


**The Advantage of an Interdisciplinary Approach**  
Integrating Social Workers and Case Management Specialists Can Increase Desired Outcomes:

- Reduce incarceration without harming public safety<sup>1</sup>
- Reduce recidivism<sup>2</sup>
- Reduce in racial disparities in pretrial detention<sup>3</sup>
- Cost savings<sup>4</sup>
- Improvement in case outcomes<sup>5</sup>
- Free up attorney time to work on legal issues<sup>6</sup>

California Counties with Social Workers in Public Defense System




Percent of California Counties with Social Workers in Indigent Defense Systems




Category	Percentage
Primary Defense System	50%
1st Level of Conflict	17%
2nd Level of Conflict	0%

■ CA Counties with Social Workers in Indigent Defense

### Why Use Social Workers and Case Management Specialists in Public Defense?




**61%**  
of individuals jailed with mental health conditions could be safely diverted outside of jail.<sup>7</sup>



**\$165 million**  
dollars in estimated cost savings over ten years in the Bronx from incorporating social workers into a holistic defense model by saving 1.1 million jail days through increasing non-jail alternatives.<sup>8</sup>

**Social Workers Reduce Incarceration Without Harming Public Safety**

- Create mitigation packets for sentencing
- Diagnose mental health conditions
- Review mental health and education records
- Provide support for clients in custody and placements
- Testify as experts regarding clients' needs
- Collect community and job information for judges to assess the safety of pretrial release

**Office of the State Public Defender**

## Using Opioid Settlement Funds in County Public Defense Systems

### How counties can maximize use of their opioid settlement funding by directing funds to public defense

- Embed social workers in public defender offices to diagnose and coordinate treatment options
- Jail reentry specialists to coordinate services and medication for release
- Client advocates to connect to services
- Peer navigators with lived experience to make appointments
- Homeless coordinators to connect with housing
- Youth advocates to redirect youth towards positive programming

### How much money is available to my county?

The final figures are incomplete as some settlements are still pending, but here's a short list:<sup>1</sup>

- **California is estimated to receive \$2.05 billion** from the Janssen Distributors Settlement Agreements for now through 2028, a combination of 3,000 lawsuits involving Janssen Pharmaceuticals (parent company of Johnson and Johnson), and the "big three" distributors, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health
- **California and its cities and counties stand to receive up to \$1.8 billion** for substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery from Teva, Allergan and the Pharmacies. California is likely to receive settlements that are still pending:<sup>2</sup>
  - \$470 million - CVS
  - \$510 million - Walgreens
  - \$265 million - Walmart
  - \$205 million - Allergan
  - \$275 million - Teva

Read an overview of the funding sources from the Department of Health Care Services [here](#). The Office of the Attorney General also has a summary available [here](#).

**On this page, you'll find two links that include payments already made to your jurisdiction (including dollar amounts and payment date) [here](#) and [here](#).**

### Where does the money go?

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will provide oversight and monitoring for funds received through opioid settlements, pursuant to the California State Subdivision Agreements.<sup>3</sup>

**15% - California State Fund** to the State of California for future opioid remediation activities.<sup>4</sup> DHCS has released several grant opportunities for these funds.

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## Training SharePoint Website

IDID's Training SharePoint is a collaborative online platform that houses recorded webinars, a calendar of upcoming events, and practical resources for defenders and defense team members. The site is free to access for members of the defense community with prior [registration](#).

The platform includes over 200 hours of recorded webinars, most of which qualify for self-study MCLE credit. The library continues to grow, with recent additions including:

- Americans with Disabilities Advocacy Page
- CARE Court data collection tool
- California Death Penalty Manual
- Criminal legal system staff data
- Death Penalty Equal Protection Writ news page
- Legislative tracking
- Pro Per Guide to Family Courts for California Public Defender Offices and Their Clients
- Resources for Trainers
- RJA4ALL progress flyer

## Defend-on-Demand Online Courses

IDID expanded its on-demand course library, in partnership with the National Association for Public Defense (NAPD). These on-demand courses are substantive – typically 5-12 hours in length – and can be instructor led through online meetings, self-paced, or a hybrid combination. Courses currently offered:

- CARE Court Defender Fundamentals
- Defending Against SVP Commitments
- Fundamentals of Indigent Defense: Onboarding for All Defenders
- Introduction to Preliminary Hearings
- Nuts and Bolts of SB 1437/775: Murder and Attempted Murder Resentencings
- Racial Justice Act Nuts and Bolts
- Sustaining and Supporting Well-Being in Public Defense

In 2024, registrants for these courses came from 50 of California's counties, proving a true resource to defenders and defense teams across the entire state.

### Feedback for IDID's On-Demand Programs

*As with all of your trainings, this one was packed with valuable information that will be immediately put into practice.*

– Participant, CARE Court Defender Fundamentals

*This was such a wonderful course, and I am going to recommend it to all of my new felony attorney friends. Will be on the lookout for more.*

– Participant, Introduction to Preliminary Hearings



# Supporting CARE Court

The Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Act (CARE Act) created a new non-criminal court process through which mental health treatment and other support services may be ordered for those with untreated schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. Indigent defenders took on the new responsibility of representing respondents in these proceedings. To support the statewide implementation of the CARE Act, IDID:

- Published a CARE Court practice guide for defenders.
- Established a dedicated email discussion group and recurring meetup for respondent's counsel.
- Provided individualized case consultations to support defenders.
- Hosted a 2-day live training focused on defender's role in CARE Court.
- Offered technical assistance to county administrators on CARE Court related issues.
- Presented a series of virtual trainings designed to support and guide defense teams working in CARE Court.

To aid counties in meeting CARE Court's robust data reporting requirements – set by the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC) – OSPD developed a data tracking tool. The tool was designed to help counties collect and organize the quarterly data mandated for CARE Court funding recipients, including information on client demographics, legal outcomes, and service access. To effectively support counties, IDID hosted a webinar to introduce the tool and walk users through its functionality.



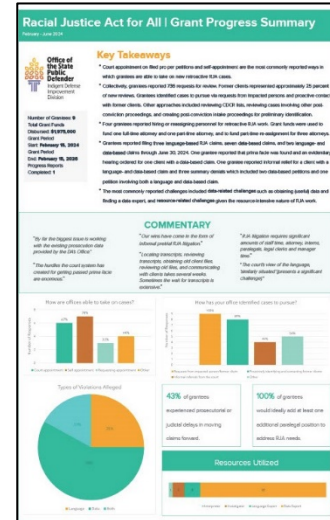
IDID team members at the CARE Court Defender Summit in Long Beach.

# Advancing the Racial Justice Act

## Grant Implementation

In September 2022, the Racial Justice Act (RJA) was amended by AB 256, known as the “Racial Justice for All Act.” This amendment extended the opportunity to seek relief under the RJA to individuals with criminal convictions or juvenile adjudications that occurred prior to January 1, 2021. The expanded eligibility is being phased in over time, with provisions going into effect between January 1, 2023, and January 1, 2026, as codified in Penal Code § 745(j).

In the 2023 Budget Act, the Legislature allocated \$2 million to local assistance, to be distributed through OSPD. Because the need outweighed the funding, OSPD designed a competitive grant fund to allocate the funds. These funds were awarded to defense offices in Marin, Orange, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Ventura, and Yolo counties, as well as the University of San Francisco School of Law’s Racial Justice Clinic. The 24-month grant period began in February 2024.



IDID collected two progress reports in 2024 from grantees as they began this critical work. Grantees reported encountering systemic and data-related challenges, particularly in overcoming *prima facie* hurdles in the courts. By mid-year, grantees collectively received approximately 736 requests for case review.

## Statewide RJA Engagement

To support the implementation of the RJA, IDID provided training, technical assistance, and other resources for attorneys and stakeholders across California. This work included:

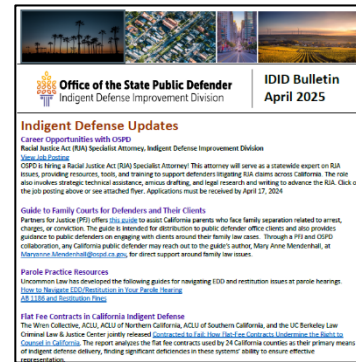
- Individual case consultations.
- Monthly meetups for defenders.
- Multiple live and virtual trainings for defenders.
- Articles and briefings for defenders litigating the RJA.
- Publications on current caselaw, including a law review article.
- *Amicus* filings on key issues affecting the application of the RJA.
- A needs assessment in 17 counties to identify RJA implementation challenges.
- Technical assistance to the Committee on the Revision of Penal Code and the legislature.
- Convening of California’s appellate projects to increase coordination and facilitate communication.

# Building Defender Networks

## IDID Monthly Bulletin

IDID continued publishing its monthly bulletin – a platform for sharing timely updates and resources relevant to the defense community. Almost 3,000 people receive the bulletin monthly. The bulletin includes information on indigent defense developments, recent legislative progress, research highlights, job opportunities, and training offered by OSPD and other agencies. Notably, in 2024, legislative tracking and job postings were added as regular features.

The bulletin is distributed monthly to IDID group email subscribers and is also publicly available on the [Training Section](#) of the OSPD website. To subscribe to the IDID monthly bulletin and weekly training reminder, please [email a request](#).



## Email Discussion Groups

Over 2800 defenders and stakeholders are connected through OSPD's email discussion groups. These platforms serve as valuable forums for discussing rapidly evolving practice areas, sharing recent legal updates, data collection and research, and troubleshooting legal issues in real-time. Topics include:

- CARE Court
- Resentencing
- Resources for trainers
- Racial Justice Act and Discriminatory Jury Challenges




# Convenings and Presentations

IDID hosted a series of public defense focused events designed to strengthen California's public defense infrastructure, and spotlight emerging issues impacting indigent defense. These events brought together defenders, defense leaders, legislative and government leaders, community-based organizations, policy advocates, academics, media members, and key system stakeholders.



Panel speakers at the IDID's *Meeting the Need* conference.

## Meeting the Need: The State of Public Defense in California

  	
<b>Meeting the Need:</b> <b>The State of Public Defense in California</b> Thursday, September 29th, 2024, AUC Ballroom at UC Davis	
<b>Breakfast and Registration</b> 8:45am-9:25am	
<b>Welcome</b>	9:30am-9:55am
MC: Miguel Queralta, Co-Director, Mend Collaborative Opening Remarks: Jessica Berg, Dean, UC Davis School of Law Keynote: Ricardo Garcia, Chief Public Defender, Los Angeles County	
<b>Public Defense and Community Safety</b>	10:00am-11:15am
A conversation with county leaders on implementing public defense systems to small and rural counties and the role of institutional public defender offices in community trust and safety. Headline Rogers, Chief Public Defender, Santa Cruz County Nishka Cakram, Assistant County Administrative Officer, Santa Cruz Mandy Sandoz, Supervisor, Board of Supervisors, San Benito County Eric Taylor, Sheriff, San Benito County Facilitator: Adrienne Mitchell, Capacity Building Attorney, Office of State Public Defender	
<b>Break</b> 11:15am-11:30am	
<b>California's Place in the National Landscape</b>	11:35am-12:40pm
A panel exploring the funding and design of public defense systems nationally and across California and how stakeholders can strengthen systems. Aditi Guel, Deputy Director, Sixth Amendment Center Nikhil Ramamany, Senior Counsel, Office for Access to Justice, DOJ Mira Choudhury, Senior Staff Attorney, Criminal Justice Program, ACLU Facilitator: La Mue Kyle Griffiths, Division Chief, Training Division, Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office	
<b>On-Site Catered Lunch</b> 12:40pm-1:40pm	
<b>Exploring the Attorney Shortage</b>	1:45pm-2:50pm
A discussion of the causes and possible solutions to the crisis, including attorney shortages in California and ongoing research on attorney retention in public defender offices. Scott Gross, Chief Public Defender, Tulare County Jesse Christensen, Esq., Professor of Law, UC Davis School of Law Facilitator: Tracie Olson, Chief Public Defender, Yolo County	
<b>Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks</b>	2:55pm-3:15pm
MC: Miguel Queralta, Co-Director, Mend Collaborative Calli Lyle, State Public Defender	
Thank you to Arnold Ventures for providing funding support for this response and to UC Davis School of Law, King Hall Legal Foundation, and the Office of the State Public Defender for their support.	
Views and opinions expressed during this event are those of the individual speakers/presenters and do not necessarily represent the views or positions of the Office of the State Public Defender, UC Davis School of Law, or King Hall Legal Foundation.	

California's first policy conference focused on public defense was hosted at UC Davis School of Law and included practitioners and policymakers invited by OSPD.

Attendees engaged with topics that included how attorney and resource shortages impact constitutional rights, how California's public defense system fits into the national landscape, and the critical role that public defenders play in promoting public safety.



## New Strategies for Advocacy Training

IDID hosted a two-day in-person defender training event in Chico. The training included a range of timely and emerging topics in indigent defense, including recent changes in felony sentencing, litigating access to social media material, and integrating the Racial Justice Act into everyday practice.

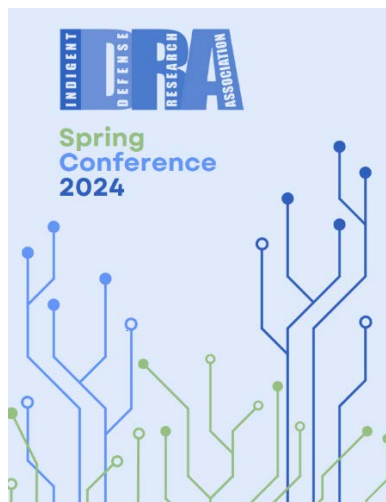
A highlight of the event was an innovative RJA community talk that brought together defenders and community members to discuss the real-world impact of litigation under the RJA.



## Statewide Standards Development

In anticipation of publishing guidance, IDID hosted a statewide convening of panel and county leaders to gather input and understand the impact of new statewide standards for panel and contract-based attorneys. This event – which built upon the success of a 2023 meeting with county panel stakeholders– provided a structured forum for shaping practical, consensus-driven statewide standards.

## Using Data to Drive Change



IDID presented at the Indigent Defense Research Association’s Spring conference. The session provided attendees with practical tools for gathering and analyzing data from a variety of sources to measure the efficacy of a system – including probation, courts, sheriff, district attorneys, defenders, judges, and former clients. In addition, the session included sample data requests, client surveys, links to publicly available data, and tips on how to present these to stakeholders.

In another session, an IDID attorney joined a panel to discuss a recent trial-level challenge involving the Racial Justice Act and its implications for defenders statewide.

# What Is Next?

In 2025, IDID will continue its commitment to strengthening and improving public defense across California through training, capacity building, technical assistance, and collaborative support. Planned priorities for the upcoming year include:

## **Developing Practical Defender Resources**

IDID will continue to strengthen California's public defense by supporting defenders in their day-to-day work by producing focused resources, including a practice-ready motions library, expanded on-demand courses, and timely webinars addressing emerging areas of law and practice.

## **County Outreach and Support**

To ensure that defenders around the state have access to OSPD training and support, IDID will continue ongoing outreach across the state. Quarterly meetings for county administrators and panel leaders ensure that all California counties have access to best practices, expert assistance, and research and data support. Technical assistance to individual counties will continue to be available when requested by county leaders.

## **Addressing the Statewide Defender Shortage**

IDID will bolster efforts to address the statewide defense attorney shortage, including continuing and growing the Rural Defender Summer Internship Program, releasing a resource guide for public defense recruitment, and offering a summer training series for college and law student interns in small and rural counties. In addition, IDID will work to increase outreach to law schools to encourage students to consider careers in public defense.

## **Supporting Data Informed Decision-Making**

IDID is examining disparities in state-administered grant funding for trial-level prosecution and public defense to inform more equitable resource allocation. There will be continued focus on identifying areas where data collection and analysis can guide decision-making and drive more equitable outcomes throughout California.

## **Continuing Impactful Collaborations**

Ongoing partnerships with stakeholders, community-based organizations, and allied professional groups will remain central to IDID's efforts. This collaboration will include co-hosting an in-person trial skills training event with the California Public Defender's Association and collaborating with the National Legal Aid Defender Association on appellate defender training.

## In Appreciation

IDID extends its sincere gratitude and thanks to the defenders, defense leaders, community organizations, nonprofit partners, funders, county leadership, and stakeholders whose collaboration and partnership has been essential to protecting rights and safeguarding liberties for all Californians.