

# MEMORANDUM

# ALASKA COURT SYSTEM

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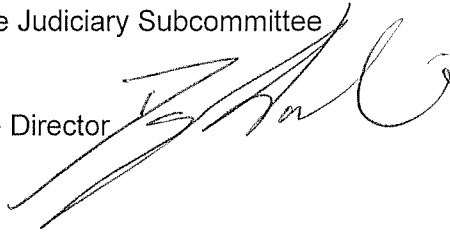
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**TO:** Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Chair, Senate Finance Judiciary Subcommittee

**FROM:** Doug Wooliver  
Deputy Administrative Director  
Alaska Court System

**DATE:** April 11, 2019

**RE:** Questions from April 10<sup>th</sup> Subcommittee Meeting



During the Senate Finance Judiciary Subcommittee meeting on Wednesday, April 10, 2019 the court system was asked about the budget decisions made in the house, and about the recidivism rates for those who participate in the therapeutic court process. The following provides additional details on those issues.

## House Budget for Judiciary

The house funded the court's top priority, which is a \$1.7 million increment to match the salary adjustment that other state employees received through collective bargaining agreements. This increment is consistent with the past practice of providing the judiciary's non-covered employees with the same cost of living adjustments received by executive branch employees under collective bargaining agreements. It was added in the house finance committee as part of the committee substitute introduced by the co-chairs.

The house also approved an increment of \$393,800 to cover increased lease costs for several of our facilities. The biggest increases are in Bethel (an increase of \$164,400 a year), and Juneau (an increase of \$116,500 a year). Other smaller lease increases in Seward and Kotzebue as well as increases in utilities and service contracts make up the remainder of the increment.

The house approved an increment of \$313,300 to cover the cost of three new employees in the therapeutic court appropriation: two new probation officers, and a deputy statewide coordinator. One of those positions, the new probation officer for the Palmer Wellness Court, is no longer needed as the court received a one-year extension of a federal grant that has been funding that position. Because that extension was not approved until late in the process, it is still in the house budget, but can be removed in the senate.

The two remaining positions are a probation officer to serve the Fairbanks Wellness Court in order to begin the process of expanding that court to add a veteran's component, and a deputy statewide coordinator to help with the day-to-day monitoring and oversight of the courts in order to allow our statewide coordinator (Michelle Bartley) to focus on statewide, policy level improvements for all of our therapeutic courts.

Finally, the house did not approve the court's request for \$3.1 million to reopen the courts on Friday afternoons.

### **Therapeutic Court Recidivism**

The committee also asked for some additional recidivism data on those who participate in therapeutic courts. The attached charts reflect the statewide outcomes for each type of court we currently have.

These charts define recidivism as new criminal convictions; recidivism does not include other contacts with the criminal justice system such as arrests, petitions to revoke probation, or violations of conditions of release.

They reflect all participants, whether they graduated or left the courts under other circumstances (discharged due to needs the courts couldn't meet, discharged due to non-compliance, opted-out).

Recidivism rates for Drug/DUI Courts - 28%

Recidivism rates for Coordinated Resources Projects (Mental Health Courts) - 43%

Recidivism rates for Veterans Court – 26%

Recidivism rates for CINA Therapeutic Court – 24%

Just a cautionary note – this is not research, so the data review is not as rigorous as it might be under an external evaluation. The non-graduates that have no new convictions may have been incarcerated for some period of time during the past five years. That said, given the kinds of cases that are allowed into the courts, it's unlikely that many of them would have been incarcerated the entire past five years.

I hope this memo is useful, but please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Doug Wooliver  
Deputy Administrative Director  
Alaska Court System