State of Alaska Department of Administration

Public Defender Agency Presentation to House Finance Subcommittee Samantha Cherot, Division Director February 8, 2022



PDA: Overview

- Mission: To provide constitutionally mandated legal representation to indigent clients appointed by the court.
 - 83%-85% of all indigent appointments are handled by the Public Defender Agency

Criminal Litigation

- Misdemeanors
- Felonies
- Petitions to revoke probation & parole
- Juvenile Delinquency
- 5th Amendment

Civil Litigation

- Child in Need of Aid
- Commitment

Post-Conviction

- Appeals
 - Merit, Bail, Sentence
 - Petitions for postconviction relief (PCR)

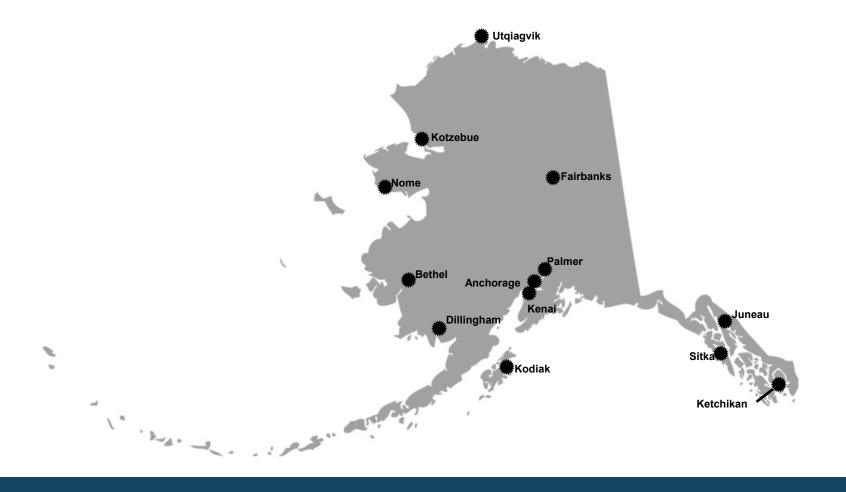
Administration

- Management
 - Legislation
 - Operations
 - Budget & Accounting
 - Records
 - AmeriCorps/HDP



PDA: Overview

Office	Attorneys
Anchorage	54
Bethel	8
Dillingham	2
Fairbanks	15
Juneau	5
Kenai	9
Ketchikan	4
Kodiak	2
Kotzebue	2
Nome	3
Palmer	11
Sitka	1
Utqiagvik	0
Total	116





PDA: Challenges

Workload, Retention, & Recruitment

Workload Challenges

- COVID-19 Backlog
- Open A/U Felonies creates a minimum weighted average of 174 cases per experienced attorney
- FY22 Projections:
 - ↑18% Class A felonies (serious felonies)
 - ↑5% civil commitment cases
 - 个 7% Bethel
 - ↑ juvenile delinquency
 - ↑ parole revocations

Impacts on Retention/Recruitment

- \$\sqrt{\text{in highly skilled and experienced}}\$

 attorneys
- \uparrow training and supervision needs
- ↑ backlog of misdemeanor & felony cases
 - SOA Felony open cases 7,300 now v.
 5,100 in Nov. 2019
 - SOA Misdemeanor open cases 12,400 now v. 9,100 in Nov. 2019
- ↑ backlog of serious felony trials



PDA: Accomplishments

Recruitment, Retention, & Training

- Aggressive recruitment strategies have allowed us to continue on-boarding attorneys and staff despite the challenges in this area
 - ✓ Filled attorney positions in many offices have increased beyond previous fiscal years, with some experiencing no current vacancies
- Focus on internal promotion to improve retention for attorneys and staff
- Increased training and supervision for attorneys & staff
- AmeriCorps Program Expansion



Department of Administration

Championing improvement in the State's performance and results.

