



2026-27 Budget Presentation

Ellen McDonnell, Chief Public Defender

Public Defender Mission

Relentless advocacy. Holistic defense. Community Impact.

The Contra Costa Public Defender:

- Provides **constitutionally mandated** legal defense
- Advances **equity and fairness** in the legal system
- Delivers **holistic, client-centered** representation
- Addresses **root causes** to reduce system involvement

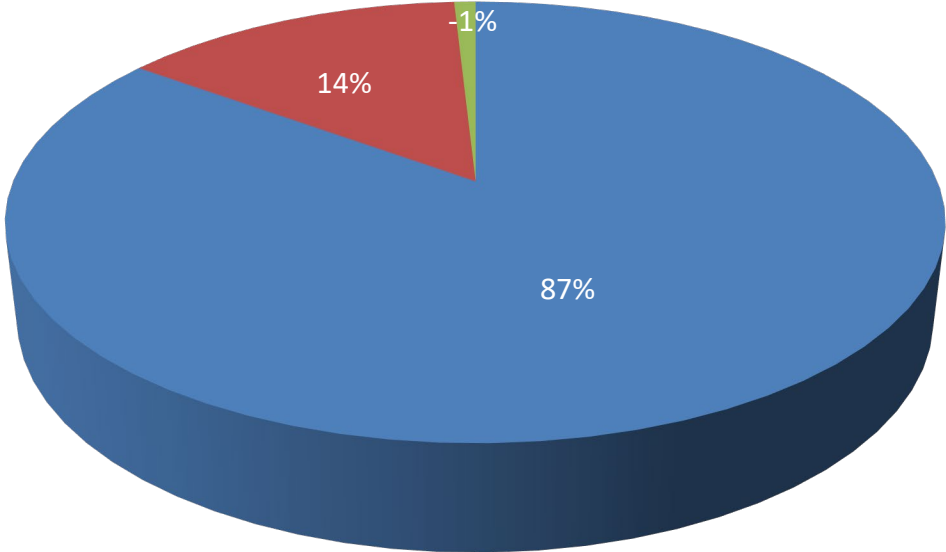


Public Defender Budget Overview

General Fund	FY 24-25 Actuals	FY 25-26 Revised	FY 26-27 Recommended	Change
Expenses	\$49,454,655	\$60,110,813	\$57,965,383	(\$2,145,430)
Revenues	\$11,254,810	\$11,882,596	\$11,541,174	(\$341,422)
Net County Cost	\$38,199,844	\$48,228,217	\$46,424,209	(\$1,804,008)
Positions (Budgeted FTE)	194.5	202.5	200.5	(2.0)

CCPD FY 26–27 Recommended Expenditure Appropriation

FY 26/27 Expenditures



- Salaries & Benefits - \$50.2M
- Services & Supplies - \$8.3M
- Other, Fixed Assets, & Transfers - (\$519,279)

CCPD 2026-27 Employee Distribution by Category

Classification	Number
Attorneys	113.5
Investigators	14
Social Workers	15
Legal Assistants	24
Clerical	19
Administrative	11
Case Preparation Assistants	4
Total FTE	200.5

Public Defender 2025 Case Referrals By Practice Area

	CY 2025
Felonies	2,450
Misdemeanors	4,765
Youth Defense	514
Mental Health	559
Revocations	1,495
Post-Conviction	59
Clean Slate	2,709
Immigration	440
Total Cases Referred	12,991

Public Defender 2025 Trials

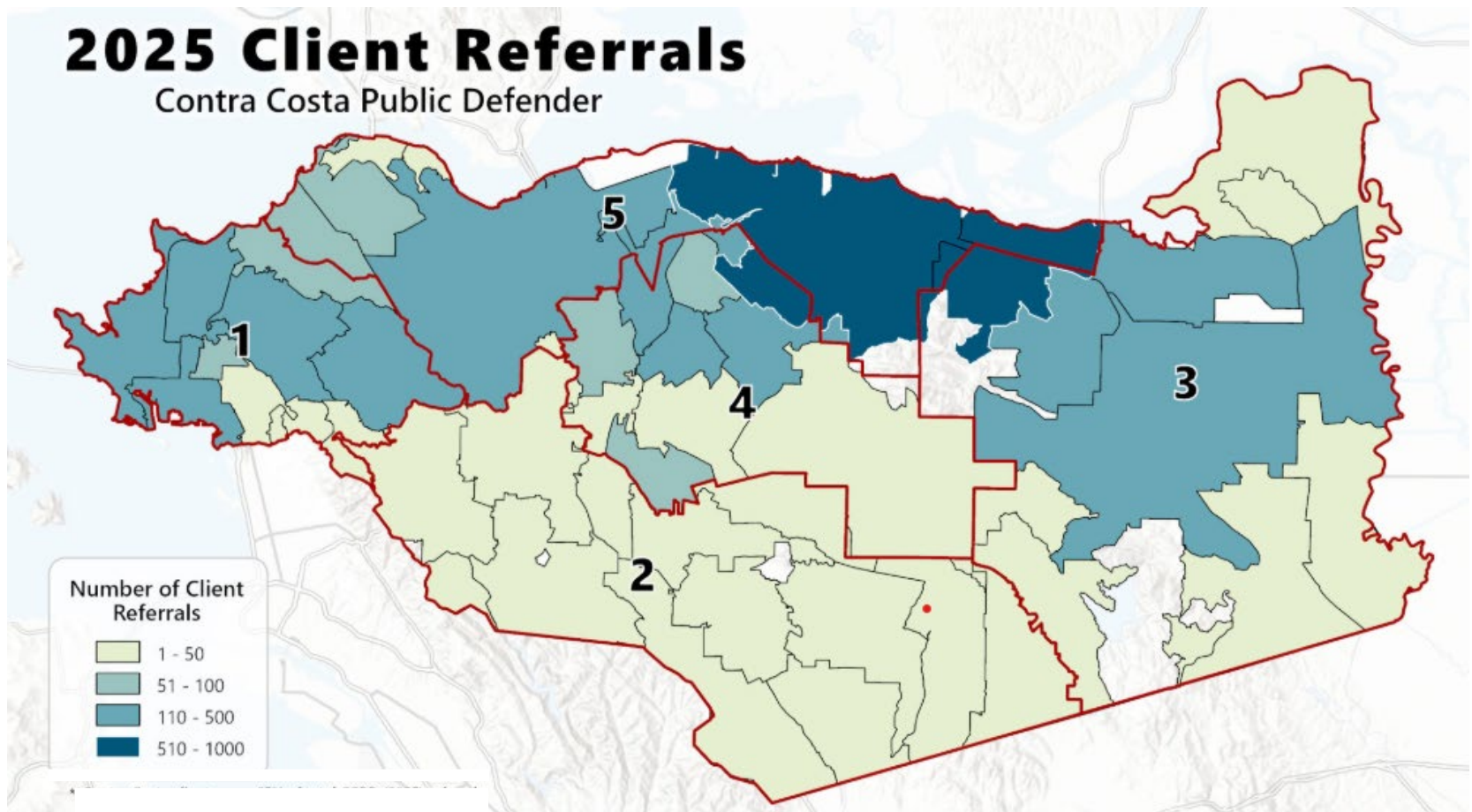
	Number of Trials	Number of Days in Trial	Average Trial Length (Days)
Total Trials	237	1444	6.09
Total Jury Trials	190	1302	6.85
Total Court Trials	47	142	3.02

Who We Serve

2025 Referrals by Race

Race/Ethnicity	Referral % by Race/Ethnicity
Black or African American alone	37.06%
Hispanic or Latino, not white	32.14%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	23.13%
Two or more races	3.60%
Asian alone	1.79%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1.63%
Unknown	0.56%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.09%

Who We Served in 2025 by Supervisorial District



CCPD Programs Advancing Equity

- CARE Court
- Clean Slate program
- Holistic Intervention Partnership (HIP)
- Mental Health Diversion
- Racial Justice Act Litigation
- Social Work & Reentry Services Unit
- Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC)
- Strategic Litigation & Research Unit
- Youth Early Intervention Partnership (YEIP)



Inaugural CCPD Youth Defender Academy



- Part of CCPD partnership with the Black Public Defender Association (BPDA)
- First Annual Defender Academy for local High Schoolers
- Learned about the criminal system, public defender careers, and know your legal rights



2025–26 Performance Highlights

- Representation in **Conservatorship** cases improved and case backlogs reduced
- **Youth Early Intervention Partnership (YEIP)** services expanded to Alternate Defender Office (ADO) and Conflict Panel
- Increased **Immigration Legal Services** support provided
- Continued **post-conviction relief** and **Racial Justice Act** litigation successes
- **Office of State Public Defender (OSPD)** grant funding received to provide holistic services



Current Public Defender Challenges

- CCPD inadequate support staffing to meet the recommended attorney to support staff ratio set forth in the **California Public Defense Workloads & Staffing Report** (Sept. 2025)
- Increase in **criminal case** referrals to CCPD in 2025: misdemeanor cases **18% increase** last year
- **Proposition 36** cases further burden felony caseloads and increase **racial disparities**



Post-Conviction Litigation Unit & Racial Justice Act Updates

- **State reimbursement funding** now available for Retroactive Racial Justice Act cases
- Focus:
 - Addressing **racial bias**
 - Correcting **unjust sentences**
 - Ensuring **due process**
- **~300** active post-conviction clients
- **Hundreds of** potential Racial Justice Act claims under review



Mental Health Unit Updates



CARE Court Launch and Implementation

- **122** participants referred to CARE Court since launch
- **84** participants currently open to CARE Court

Mental Health Diversion (MHD) growth continues

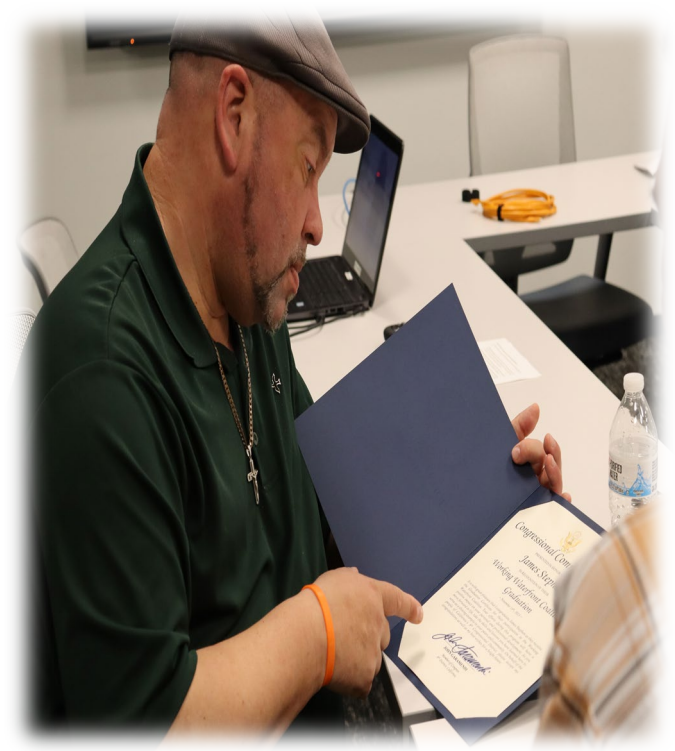
- PD has **140** clients in MHD and is supervising them with our Social Work team
- This number has more than doubled in the last year

Need:

- Continued staffing to meet MH Unit demand
- Avoid incarceration for treatable conditions

Holistic Intervention Partnership (HIP) Update

- Partnership with community organizations to provide supportive, wraparound services which address the root causes of system involvement
- Early intervention addresses holistic needs such as access to housing, mental health and substance use treatment, civil legal aide
- Research has found that HIP decreases future arrests and convictions
- Although a new state grant was awarded, reduced future funding has resulted in decreased support for housing and other reentry needs



Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC)

Immigration Legal Services Update

Fielded nearly **3,500** hotline calls this fiscal year, partnered with CCPD and partner agencies on almost **800** separate legal consultations, attended **20** community events and served **400+** people.

In January 2026 we began deploying our Mobile Legal Clinic countywide.



The Year Ahead

Priority is a Safer, More Equitable Contra Costa

- Locate additional housing funding for Public Defender clients
- Support mental health diversion team staffing
- Continue immigration legal support
- Launch new Public Defender website in Summer 2026
- Continue to expand holistic defense model
- Strengthen community partnerships
- Improve access to Public Defender services in East County



As we near 60 years of service, we thank the Board for its enduring support in making this work—and these outcomes—possible.

**First Contra Costa Public Defender Office
901 Pine Street, Martinez - 1966**

Why Investment In Public Defense Matters

Without investment:

- Increased incarceration costs
- Higher recidivism
- Strain on courts and jails

With investment:

- Reduced system involvement
- Healthier communities
- Long-term County savings



**Thank
You!**