

COURT-APPOINTMENT PROGRAMS:

INDIGENT DEFENSE ADMINISTRATION AND DEPENDENCY REPRESENTATION PROGRAM

Julie Traun

The Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS), a State Bar of California certified program, has administered the court appointment programs for the criminal, juvenile delinquency, and juvenile dependency courts for many years, and the program has evolved and changed considerably over time.

LRIS qualifies attorneys through a rigorous application process that requires both extensive experience and a thorough peer reference-review process. LRIS staff calendars these same qualified attorneys (up to fifteen) each day to appear in court for cases qualifying for court-appointed counsel.

In the last year, in collaboration with San Francisco Superior Court, the court programs expanded this role to include a small number of panels in Family Court: Adoptions, Minor's Counsel, and Family Law Contempt. All court panels also require fifteen units of specialized MCLE annually. And all attorneys are required to renew membership in the panel at three- or five-year intervals, depending on the panel. At the time of renewal, all applicants must again satisfy these rigorous requirements.

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warranted—is entitled to excellent representation. The committee is fortunate that so many attorneys remain willing to do this work so capably; more than 160 attorneys are members of one or more court panels.

In 2003, with the formation of the Indigent Defense Administration (IDA), LRIS also took over the review of requests for compensation for providers. Not only does IDA provide oversight and review of thousands of criminal and delinquency attorney, investigator, and expert witness bills annually, it provides sound statistical analysis and fiscal oversight of expenditures.

At the request of San Francisco Superior Court, in 2007 LRIS expanded its role in dependency and formed the Dependency Representation Program (DRP) to include full-scope bill review of invoices from attorneys,



investigators, social workers, and experts, similar to the IDA program. And in 2015, IDA/DRP expanded once again to include oversight of bill review in a number of family law matters. Three criminal-, dependency-, and delinquency-trained attorneys, along with an extensive data-entry staff, process more than ten thousand bills annually.

Experienced panel attorneys are both efficient and knowledgeable, and therefore cost-effective. Each case presents unique factual and legal issues, and clients are best served by attorneys who are compensated for reasonable services rendered. Panel attorneys are paid hourly, albeit at rates substantially less than in privately retained cases. The quid pro quo essential for attorneys to accept court-appointed rates is the opportunity to keep skills dynamic and to litigate issues at the forefront of the legal and forensic frontier. The involvement of a broad spectrum of private counsel, in turn, energizes and enhances the overall quality of practice in San Francisco.

LRIS is committed to maintaining these diverse panels of committed attorneys working in challenging areas of law representing the most vulnerable San Franciscans.

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