



Ohio Revised Code

Section 120.04 State public defender - powers and duties.

Effective: October 3, 2023

Legislation: House Bill 33

(A) The state public defender shall serve at the pleasure of the Ohio public defender commission and shall be an attorney with a minimum of four years of experience in the practice of law and be admitted to the practice of law in this state at least one year prior to appointment.

(B) The state public defender shall do all of the following:

(1) Maintain a central office in Columbus. The central office shall be provided with a library of adequate size, considering the needs of the office and the accessibility of other libraries, and other necessary facilities and equipment.

(2) Appoint assistant state public defenders, all of whom shall be attorneys admitted to the practice of law in this state, and other personnel necessary for the operation of the state public defender office. Assistant state public defenders shall be appointed on a full-time basis. The state public defender, assistant state public defenders, and employees appointed by the state public defender shall not engage in the private practice of law.

(3) Supervise the compliance of county public defender offices, joint county public defender offices, and county appointed counsel systems with standards established by rules of the Ohio public defender commission pursuant to division (B) of section 120.03 of the Revised Code;

(4) Keep and maintain financial records of all cases handled and develop records for use in the calculation of direct and indirect costs, in the operation of the office, and report periodically, but not less than annually, to the commission on all relevant data on the operations of the office, costs, projected needs, and recommendations for legislation or amendments to court rules, as may be appropriate to improve the criminal justice system;

(5) Collect all moneys due the state for reimbursement for legal services under this chapter and under section 2941.51 of the Revised Code and institute any actions in court on behalf of the state for the



collection of such sums that the state public defender considers advisable. Except as provided otherwise in division (D) of section 120.06 of the Revised Code, all moneys collected by the state public defender under this chapter and section 2941.51 of the Revised Code shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the client payment fund, which is hereby created. All moneys credited to the fund shall be used by the state public defender to appoint assistant state public defenders and to provide other personnel, equipment, and facilities necessary for the operation of the state public defender office, to reimburse counties for the operation of county public defender offices, joint county public defender offices, and county appointed counsel systems pursuant to sections 120.18, 120.28, and 120.33 of the Revised Code, or to provide assistance to counties in the operation of county indigent defense systems.

(6) With respect to funds appropriated to the commission to pay criminal costs, perform the duties imposed by sections 2949.19 and 2949.201 of the Revised Code;

(7) Establish standards and guidelines for the reimbursement, pursuant to sections 120.18, 120.28, 120.33, 2941.51, and 2949.19 of the Revised Code, of counties for the operation of county public defender offices, joint county public defender offices, and county appointed counsel systems and for other costs related to felony prosecutions;

(8) Establish maximum amounts that the state will reimburse the counties pursuant to sections 120.18, 120.28, 120.33, and 2941.51 of the Revised Code;

(9) Establish maximum amounts that the state will reimburse the counties pursuant to section 120.33 of the Revised Code for each specific type of legal service performed by a county appointed counsel system;

(10) Administer sections 120.18, 120.28, 120.33, 2941.51, and 2949.19 of the Revised Code and make reimbursements pursuant to those sections;

(11) Administer the program established pursuant to sections 120.51 to 120.55 of the Revised Code for the charitable public purpose of providing financial assistance to legal aid societies. Neither the state public defender nor any of the state public defender's employees who is responsible in any way for the administration of that program and who performs those administrative responsibilities in good



faith is in any manner liable if a legal aid society that is provided financial assistance under the program uses the financial assistance other than in accordance with sections 120.51 to 120.55 of the Revised Code or fails to comply with the requirements of those sections.

(12) Establish an office for the handling of appeal and postconviction matters;

(13) Provide technical aid and assistance to county public defender offices, joint county public defender offices, and other local counsel providing legal representation to indigent persons, including representation and assistance on appeals.

(C) The state public defender may do any of the following:

(1) In providing legal representation, conduct investigations, obtain expert testimony, take depositions, use other discovery methods, order transcripts, and make all other preparations which are appropriate and necessary to an adequate defense or the prosecution of appeals and other legal proceedings;

(2) Seek, solicit, and apply for grants for the operation of programs for the defense of indigent persons from any public or private source, and may receive donations, grants, awards, and similar funds from any lawful source. Such funds shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the public defender gifts and grants fund, which is hereby created.

(3) Make all the necessary arrangements to coordinate the services of the office with any federal, county, or private programs established to provide legal representation to indigent persons and others, and to obtain and provide all funds allowable under any such programs;

(4) Consult and cooperate with professional groups concerned with the causes of criminal conduct, the reduction of crime, the rehabilitation and correction of persons convicted of crime, the administration of criminal justice, and the administration and operation of the state public defender's office;

(5) Accept the services of volunteer workers and consultants at no compensation other than reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses;



- (6) Prescribe any forms that are necessary for the uniform operation of this chapter;
- (7) Contract with a county public defender commission or a joint county public defender commission to provide all or any part of the services that a county public defender or joint county public defender is required or permitted to provide by this chapter, or contract with a board of county commissioners of a county that is not served by a county public defender commission or a joint county public defender commission for the provision of services in accordance with section 120.33 of the Revised Code. All money received by the state public defender pursuant to such a contract shall be credited to the multicounty: county share fund.
- (8) Authorize persons employed as criminal investigators to attend the Ohio peace officer training academy or any other peace officer training school for training;
- (9) Procure a policy or policies of malpractice insurance that provide coverage for the state public defender and assistant state public defenders in connection with malpractice claims that may arise from their actions or omissions related to responsibilities derived pursuant to this chapter;
- (10) Enter into agreements to license, lease, sell, and market for sale intellectual property owned by the office and receive payments from those agreements for use in the operation of the office and programs for the defense of indigent persons. All funds received by the state public defender pursuant to such agreements shall be deposited in the state treasury to the credit of the public defender gifts and grants fund.
- (D) No person employed by the state public defender as a criminal investigator shall attend the Ohio peace officer training academy or any other peace officer training school unless authorized to do so by the state public defender.