



# ASSISTANCE FOR THE MERIT-BASED SELECTION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER LEADER

*approved by the NAPD Steering Committee on November 15, 2018*

In order to implement nationally recognized principles, the National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) Systems Builder Committee provides technical assistance to appointing authorities to aid in the merit-based selection of a Chief Defender in order to ensure high quality and cost-effective representation of clients.

## Levels of assistance

The NAPD Systems Builder Committee provides consultation to authorizing entities responsible for selecting a chief defender for a city, county, regional, state, or other appointing authority. Our levels of consultation include:

1. Providing a checklist of model materials and suggested process; or
2. For a pre-set fee, providing a packet of model materials plus a phone or skype session; or
3. For a pre-set fee, providing a packet of model materials, on-site visit to interview key persons in the organization and stakeholders as requested, review of applications and recommendations concerning who should be selected for in-person interviews, and on-site interviews of candidates and hiring recommendation.

Depending upon which service above the Appointing Authority selects, the process we recommend includes:

1. Governing board convenes, consults with NAPD and decides on a process for selecting a chief defender.
2. Chair of the governing board appoints a Chief Defender Search Committee.
3. Chief Defender Search Committee reviews and finalizes a job description for the chief defender.
4. Chief Defender Search Committee creates questions for and materials to be provided by persons applying for the position.
5. Chief Defender Search Committee creates interviewing questions.
6. Chief Defender Search Committee creates ad, distributes locally, statewide and nationally by NAPD Systems Builders Committee to NAPD, NLADA, NACDL, NJDC, Bar Associations, State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, ABA's SCLAID.
7. Deadline for applications is set: \_\_\_ p.m. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Chief Defender Search Committee identifies persons to be interviewed.
9. Governing Board interviews selected applicants.
10. Governing Board selects Chief Defender.
11. New Chief Defender begins on \_\_\_\_\_
12. Chief Defender is provided a mentor by NAPD if Governing Board so desires.
13. Annual Review process for Chief Defender established by Governing Board.

## Benefits of using NAPD consultation services for the merit-based selection of a public defender leader

There are advantages to an Appointing Authority of using NAPD services for the Chief Defender selection process.

With over 21,000 members and 125 organizations (including 22 statewide public defense programs), NAPD is the largest national association of public defense members and public defense programs. Its public defense knowledge and experience is unsurpassed. Using a national organization that employs national standards of practice brings unique expertise to the chief defender selection process. This promotes the integrity of the process and increases the confidence in its results for the criminal justice system and the public.

The Systems Builder Committee includes retired Chief Defenders from the public defender programs in Colorado, Kentucky, Knox County, Massachusetts (assigned counsel division), Miami, Minnesota, New Mexico, Seattle, West Virginia, and the Federal Defender for Southern California, as well as the active Chief Defenders in Augusta, GA, Minnesota (statewide), New Orleans, Seattle, Sacramento (alternate defender office) and the municipal offices in Denver and Aurora, CO.

For further information, please contact Doug Wilson or Ernie Lewis.



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### ENDNOTES

1: Information about the Systems Builders work is found at: <http://www.publicdefenders.us/systemsbuilders>

2: "Chief Public Defender" is a term of art. This term includes, Executive Directors, Chief Defenders, Public Advocates, Director of Indigent Defense Services, and all other positions of similar nature wherein the Chief Public Defender serves as the executive for the public defender organization regardless of the size of the organization. In some organizations, the executive may be the manager of a small organization in addition to serving as the executive. The executive is the individual who is the representative of the public defense organization to the legislative body, other criminal justice stakeholders, and public.

3: As part of NAPD's efforts to strengthen the quality of public defense delivery systems, the NAPD Systems Builder Committee has established a **Mentors Program for Executive and Manager Leadership**. This program is available to any new or veteran public defense leader who seeks a mentor to address professional and personal challenges in creating or enhancing a client-centered best practice public defense program. Mentors will be arranged after consultation regarding office size, structure, delivery system and challenges to address. If you are interested, please send an email to Systems Builders Chair at [william.ward@mnpd.us](mailto:william.ward@mnpd.us).

