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Chief Justice Rush Praises CCAA's At-Risk Youth and Family Pilot

In yesterday's State of the Judiciary address, Indiana Chief Justice Loretta Rush touted a Vigo County public defense pilot program that resulted in speedier resolutions and a significantly higher percentage of successful family reunifications by providing parents and their lawyers with additional case management services. Both the Vigo County pilot and the Marion County JD pilot were funded by a special appropriation made by the General Assembly to the Commission on Court Appointed Attorneys (CCAA) in 2021.

Click [HERE](#) to read the full press release.

Click [HERE](#) to read CCAA's At-Risk Youth & Family Pilot full results.

Supreme Court Issues Final Order Regarding Lawyer Shortage

As you may be aware, the [Commission on Indiana's Legal Future](#) has completed its work and made a final report to the Supreme Court. The Court then issued the final recommendations made. Click [HERE](#) to read the order.

The CCAA is very appreciative to the Commission and the Court for addressing Indiana's lawyer shortage in such a comprehensive way. Questions may be directed to [Derrick Mason](#) or [Andrew Cullen](#).

CCAA Approves Update to Adequate Staffing Standard and Guideline

During the December 2025 CCAA meeting, the Commission considered a request from the Chief Public Defenders' Association to lower the ratio required for an attorney to be considered adequately staffed. An attorney that is considered adequately staffed is allowed to handle approximately 20-33% more cases than an inadequately staffed attorney. The Commission voted to approve two key changes to its adequate support staff standards and guidelines:

1. The Commission chose not to change the standard of .75 support staff for every full-time attorney (or 3 for every 4 full-time attorneys) in order for an attorney to be considered adequately staffed. Instead, they approved a guideline change so that Commission staff only report non-compliance with this standard to the Commission based upon the actual caseloads worked by the adequately staffed attorneys and not based upon their maximum FTE/full-time status.

2. The Commission will also work with the Chief Public Defenders' Association and the Public Defender Council to develop a statement to be provided by the county to all adequately staffed attorneys regarding access to investigative services with examples of how those services are often used in Indiana. This statement is a new requirement in Standard J for counties that have adequately staffed attorneys and a waiver of this requirement will also be developed for counties that have formal training on this topic.

The first change will effectively allow lower support staff ratios for some, but not all counties (depending on how heavily utilized the attorney is compared to their maximum caseload). The new guideline recognizes that the support staff ratio should remain at .75 for each full-time attorney, but the emphasis in determining compliance will now be on the amount and type of cases assigned to the adequately staffed attorneys. Commission staff will update county reimbursement request forms in counties that have attorneys that are considered adequately staffed so that they have a calculator to determine their ongoing compliance.

The second change recognizes and addresses a key finding that the Commission discovered while studying this topic: that many public defense attorneys are unaware of their access to investigative services and/or how they might use such services to enhance public defense.



Jessie Cook Memorial Scholarship Established

The Indiana State Bar Association has created the Jessie A. Cook Criminal Justice Scholarship. Jessie Cook was a beloved member of the Indiana criminal d community. Her legacy lives on in the lawyers who knew her, learned from her, and were inspired by her excellence. The scholarship provides up to \$1000 in reimbursement for training or professional development for those who practice in the criminal justice system.

Click [HERE](#) for further information or to apply.

2026 Legislative Session Agenda

The CCAA does not have a robust legislative agenda during this non-budget year, short session. However, we continue to monitor legislation that impacts the defense system.

Currently, we are supporting the following bill: [HB 1025 \(Residency of prosecutors and public defenders\)](#); Provides that deputy public defender may not b a county residency requirement, unless the residency requirement includes all counties contiguous to the county in which the individual serves. This bill pass House unanimously and is pending in the Senate.

We are also monitoring other legislation that has an impact on the public defense system, particularly [SB 252 \(Criminal Law Matters\)](#), which is pending in the Appropriations Committee. Among other issues, it creates a new "Public Prosecution Fund" and adds a new \$40 (forty) court fee.

Click [HERE](#) to view the CCAA's live bill tracking software managed by Hallowell Consulting.

Next Open Door Hour for Chiefs/Chief Deputies Announced

Our next Open Door Hour meeting will be Friday, March 6th from 12:00pm-1:00pm via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will focus on the Pay Parity Survey and Public Meetings of PD Boards. Look for invites to be sent out in February.

CCAA Welcomes New Members; Thank You Judges Diekhoff and Hanlon

Chief Justice Rush has made her appointments to the CCAA, and we are excited to welcome three new members, with terms expiring 6-30-2029:

- Mark Clark, Chief Public Defender of Washington County (retired)
- Hon. Ryan Hatfield, Vanderburgh County Circuit Court
- Hon. Karin McGrath, Kosciusko County Superior Court

At the last Commission meeting of 2025, the Commission recognized the Honorable Mary Ellen Diekhoff and the Honorable Kelsey Hanlon for 15 and 8 years respectively. They were presented with plaques of appreciation by CCAA Chair Mark Rutherford and CCAA Executive Director Derrick Mason.



Reimbursement Request Notes

The percentage of time worked on non-reimbursable case types for support staff (reported in Section A of the reimbursement request) should be reviewed annually. Usually, most counties perform this review at the beginning of the year. If your county has not reviewed these percentages in the last four quarters, please review them now and make any necessary updates on your next submission.

If you have questions on how these percentages are calculated, please contact [Jennifer Pinkston](#).

1. Paralegals (incl benefits)	\$0.00
Percentage of time spent on non-reimbursable case support	
2. Investigators (incl benefits)	
Percentage of time spent on non-reimbursable case support	
3. Social Workers (incl benefits)	\$0.00
Percentage of time spent on non-reimbursable case support	0%
4. Administrative Assistants, Office Managers, Interns, & Non-Litigation Support Staff (incl benefits)	\$0.00
Percentage of time spent on non-reimbursable case support	0%
5. Attorneys with no caseload (incl benefits)	
Percentage of time spent on non-reimbursable case support	0%
6. Total Attorney Salaries	\$0.00
7. Total Attorney Benefits	\$0.00
TOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES	\$0.00

Problem Solving Courts Continue Gaining Steam

The Indiana Lawyer Publication recently published an in-depth profile of Indiana’s rapidly-growing Problem Solving Courts. To read the article, click [HERE](#)



Marshall County's New Comprehensive Plan Approved

At the December 2025 CCAA meeting, a new Comprehensive Plan for Indigent Defense Services was approved from Marshall County. The county has been submitting quarterly reports and receiving Federal Title IV-E reimbursements for some time. The passage of the Comprehensive Plan makes Marshall County a full member with the CCAA, eligible for the full 40% reimbursement.

Marshall County’s addition brings the total number of “Commission” Counties in Indiana to 69.

Local Public Defender Board Appointments

The CCAA welcomes the following new and/or re-appointed members to local Public Defender Boards. Their 3-year terms were approved at the recent CCAA meeting.

- Cass, Brad Rozzi
- DeKalb, Dr. Joe Dunn
- Elkhart, Douglas Mulvaney

- Howard, R. Cartwright Ellis
- Jackson, Joe Thoele
- Kosciusko, John Hall
- Madison, Hon. Jack Brinkman
- Miami, Ryan Schmidt
- Noble, Luz Elena Vargas
- Perry, James Tyler
- Pike, Cheryl Deffendall
- Scott, Alexis Bischoff
- Shelby, Brady Claxton
- Steuben, Ronald Thomas
- Wabash, Robert Lundquist

At the next meeting, the CCAA will consider appointments or re-appointments to the following local boards:

- Gibson County
- Greene County
- Hamilton County
- Jennings County
- Monroe County

[Click HERE for more information regarding local boards](#)

Questions about matters regarding local board appointments may be directed to [Andrew Cullen](#) or [Linda Hunter](#).

December 2025 Draft CCAA Meeting Minutes

[Click HERE to read the draft minutes](#)

2026 Reimbursement Request Due Dates and Commission Meeting Dates

Reimbursement Request Due Date

February 14
May 15
August 14
November 14

Commission Meeting Date

March 25
June 17
September 23
December 16

Commission meetings begin at 2 p.m. Eastern and comply with the Indiana Open Door Law (IC § 5-14-1.5). Meetings are held at the Commission Office (101 Street, Suite 1800, Indianapolis, IN, 46204) unless otherwise stated on the meeting notice and agenda. The public is invited to attend in person or via elector permitted under IC § 5-14-1.5-3.6 excluding any Executive Sessions that may be scheduled as permitted under IC § 5-14-1.5-6.1. To view the Commission's Meeting Policy, click [HERE](#).

Notice of Executive Sessions & meetings will be posted at the entrance to the Commission Office (101 W. Ohio St., Suite 1800, Indianapolis, IN, 46204) and will be [the front page of the Commission's website under "News & Announcements"](#) at least 48 hours in advance. Meeting materials and agendas will be posted at least 24 advance.

If you have any questions about the Commission meetings, contact [Derrick Mason](#)



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