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**FOR RELEASE: MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2025**

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## Counties Selected for Public Defense Misdemeanor Reimbursement Pilot *CCAA Reduces Program Size Due to State Budget Cut*

(Indianapolis) – The Commission on Court Appointed Attorneys (CCAA) has selected nine (9) Indiana counties to participate in a pilot program that will provide partial state reimbursement for county misdemeanor public defense expenses.

Beginning July 1, Clark, Dekalb, Floyd, Lawrence, Perry, Pulaski, Steuben, Vigo, and Wabash counties will be eligible for an 18-month, 40% reimbursement of county misdemeanor expenses in exchange for abiding by CCAA standards. Counties selected must agree to attorney caseload limits and fair compensation.

The CCAA received authorization to conduct this pilot program in 2024 under a provision in [Senate Enrolled Act 179](#). The statute permits the CCAA to select up to twelve (12) counties with geographic and population diversity for a 4-year pilot. However, the CCAA opted to reduce the size of the pilot and approved participation in the pilot for shorter terms due to the budget cuts that most state agencies, including the CCAA, received in the 2025 legislative session. Renewal of each county's participation after the initial 18-month term will be reviewed toward the end of the term and decisions will be based upon the CCAA's budget and the county's success with the pilot thus far.

In addition to considering population and geographic diversity, the CCAA also prioritized counties that have illustrated a history of strong leadership, good communication with CCAA staff, accuracy and timeliness of their reimbursement requests and reports, and the importance of each county's data to a pilot, including whether or not the county is already in compliance with CCAA misdemeanor standards.

"Our top priority is to guarantee that the CCAA has sufficient funding for our core mission of reimbursing all counties that comply with our standards for the entire 40% of their eligible public defense expenses," said Derrick Mason, the CCAA executive director, "We intend to achieve that mission by continuing to ensure constitutionally protected, effective public defense services are provided which our data has shown ultimately saves tax payer dollars at both the state and county level."

The overall goal of the pilot is to gather data to determine whether CCAA reimbursement to counties, in exchange for the county following standards in the representation of people charged with misdemeanors, produces improved outcomes in Indiana's criminal justice system. Counties that participate will be required to collect and report critical data on misdemeanor representation that will be evaluated later by the General Assembly.

A key provision in the bill also directs the CCAA to gather data on how courts determine whether a person charged with a crime receives an attorney at public expense. To be eligible to receive the pilot funds, Courts must agree to make indigency determinations using a new, uniform petition developed by [Indiana's Justice Reinvestment Advisory Council](#).

Indiana requires counties to bear the costs of public defense services and the CCAA is the only state entity that supports counties with that burden. Currently, the CCAA distributes over 96% of its state funding directly to counties for constitutionally mandated public defense services.

See the CCAA's website (<https://www.in.gov/ccaa/>) for further information. Follow the CCAA on "X" at [@IndianaCCAA](#).

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Specific goals for each county are listed below.

#### **Clark County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as pay is increased to meet CCAA standards and staffing is gradually increased to lower the very high misdemeanor attorneys' caseloads until compliance with CCAA standards is achieved. The CCAA expects to provide approximately \$84,016.16 in annual reimbursement during the first phase of raises and staffing increases.

#### **DeKalb County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as pay is increased to meet CCAA standards. The CCAA expects to provide \$53,082.30 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

#### **Floyd County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as the county begins receiving misdemeanor reimbursement. The county recently made changes in their misdemeanor representation and will serve as a comparison group to other pilot counties that have pay and caseload problems. The CCAA expects to provide \$106,652.72 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

#### **Lawrence County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as the county begins receiving misdemeanor reimbursement. The county will also serve as a comparison group to other pilot counties that have pay and caseload problems. The CCAA expects to provide \$83,661.96 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

**Perry County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as the county begins receiving misdemeanor reimbursement. The county will also serve as one of the few counties without a public defender office to offer a comparison group to other pilot counties that have pay and caseload problems. The CCAA expects to provide \$28,007.27 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

**Pulaski County**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as the county begins receiving misdemeanor reimbursement. The county will also serve as one of the few counties without a public defender office to offer a comparison group to other pilot counties that have pay and caseload problems. The CCAA expects to provide \$40,938.48 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

**Steuben County**

The pilot is being offered due to the county's commitment to launch a public defender office with the funds generated. It will allow the study of the creation of a new office and will generate valuable data on changes to misdemeanor representation both before and after such changes are made. The CCAA expects to provide \$73,739.53 in misdemeanor reimbursement during the initial phase of this pilot.

**Vigo County**

The bulk of Vigo County misdemeanors are currently being handled in city court by dedicated city court public defenders, who are overworked and underpaid. However, the city court is currently going through the process of being integrated into the county court system. The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes during this court system change. It will also evaluate the impact of pay increases. The CCAA expects to provide \$255,975.08 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.

**Wabash**

The pilot will evaluate misdemeanor case length and case outcomes as the county begins receiving misdemeanor reimbursement. The county will also serve as a comparison group to other pilot counties that have pay and caseload problems. The CCAA expects to provide \$43,200.20 in annual reimbursement during this pilot.