

**Chapter 10.101 RCW**  
**INDIGENT DEFENSE SERVICES**

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**RCW 10.101.005 Legislative finding.** The legislature finds that effective legal representation must be provided for indigent persons and persons who are indigent and able to contribute, consistent with the constitutional requirements of fairness, equal protection, and due process in all cases where the right to counsel attaches. [2005 c 157 § 1; 1989 c 409 § 1.]

**RCW 10.101.010 Definitions.** The following definitions shall be applied in connection with this chapter:

(1) "Anticipated cost of counsel" means the cost of retaining private counsel for representation on the matter before the court.

(2) "Available funds" means liquid assets and disposable net monthly income calculated after provision is made for bail obligations. For the purpose of determining available funds, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "Liquid assets" means cash, savings accounts, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, equity in real estate, and equity in motor vehicles. A motor vehicle necessary to maintain employment and having a market value not greater than three thousand dollars shall not be considered a liquid asset.

(b) "Income" means salary, wages, interest, dividends, and other earnings which are reportable for federal income tax purposes, and cash payments such as reimbursements received from pensions, annuities, social security, and public assistance programs. It includes any contribution received from any family member or other person who is domiciled in the same residence as the defendant and who is helping to defray the defendant's basic living costs.

(c) "Disposable net monthly income" means the income remaining each month after deducting federal, state, or local income taxes, social security taxes, contributory retirement, union dues, and basic living costs.

(d) "Basic living costs" means the average monthly amount spent by the defendant for reasonable payments toward living costs, such as shelter, food, utilities, health care, transportation, clothing, loan payments, support payments, and court-imposed obligations.

(3) "Indigent" means a person who, at any stage of a court proceeding, is:

(a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, medical care services under RCW 74.09.035, pregnant women assistance benefits, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, medicaid, or supplemental security income; or

(b) Involuntarily committed to a public mental health facility; or

(c) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of one hundred twenty-five percent or less of the current federally established poverty level; or

(d) Unable to pay the anticipated cost of counsel for the matter before the court because his or her available funds are insufficient to pay any amount for the retention of counsel.

(4) "Indigent and able to contribute" means a person who, at any stage of a court proceeding, is unable to pay the anticipated cost of counsel for the matter before the court because his or her available funds are less than the anticipated cost of counsel but sufficient for the person to pay a portion of that cost. [2011 1st sp.s. c 36 § 12; 2010 1st sp.s. c 8 § 12; 1998 c 79 § 2; 1997 c 59 § 3; 1989 c 409 § 2.]

**Reviser's note:** The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW 1.08.015(2)(k).

**Findings—Intent—2011 1st sp.s. c 36:** See RCW 74.62.005.

**Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 36:** See note following RCW 74.62.005.

**Findings—Intent—Short title—Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 8:** See notes following RCW 74.04.225.

**RCW 10.101.020 Determination of indigency—Provisional appointment—Promissory note.** (1) A determination of indigency shall be made for all persons wishing the appointment of counsel in criminal, juvenile, involuntary commitment, and dependency cases, and any other case where the right to counsel attaches. The court or its designee shall determine whether the person is indigent pursuant to the standards set forth in this chapter.

(2) In making the determination of indigency, the court shall also consider the anticipated length and complexity of the proceedings and the usual and customary charges of an attorney in the community for rendering services, and any other circumstances presented to the court which are relevant to the issue of indigency. The appointment of counsel shall not be denied to the person because the person's friends or relatives, other than a spouse who was not the victim of any offense or offenses allegedly committed by the person, have resources adequate to retain counsel, or because the person has posted or is capable of posting bond.

(3) The determination of indigency shall be made upon the defendant's initial contact with the court or at the earliest time circumstances permit. The court or its designee shall keep a written record of the determination of indigency. Any information given by the

accused under this section or sections shall be confidential and shall not be available for use by the prosecution in the pending case.

(4) If a determination of eligibility cannot be made before the time when the first services are to be rendered, the court shall appoint an attorney on a provisional basis. If the court subsequently determines that the person receiving the services is ineligible, the court shall notify the person of the termination of services, subject to court-ordered reinstatement.

(5) All persons determined to be indigent and able to contribute, shall be required to execute a promissory note at the time counsel is appointed. The person shall be informed whether payment shall be made in the form of a lump sum payment or periodic payments. The payment and payment schedule must be set forth in writing. The person receiving the appointment of counsel shall also sign an affidavit swearing under penalty of perjury that all income and assets reported are complete and accurate. In addition, the person must swear in the affidavit to immediately report any change in financial status to the court.

(6) The office or individual charged by the court to make the determination of indigency shall provide a written report and opinion as to indigency on a form prescribed by the office of public defense, based on information obtained from the defendant and subject to verification. The form shall include information necessary to provide a basis for making a determination with respect to indigency as provided by this chapter. [1997 c 41 § 5; 1989 c 409 § 3.]

**RCW 10.101.030 Standards.** Each county or city under this chapter shall adopt standards for the delivery of public defense services, whether those services are provided by contract, assigned counsel, or a public defender office. Standards shall include the following: Compensation of counsel, duties and responsibilities of counsel, case load limits and types of cases, responsibility for expert witness fees and other costs associated with representation, administrative expenses, support services, reports of attorney activity and vouchers, training, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of attorneys, substitution of attorneys or assignment of contracts, limitations on private practice of contract attorneys, qualifications of attorneys, disposition of client complaints, cause for termination of contract or removal of attorney, and nondiscrimination. The standards endorsed by the Washington state bar association for the provision of public defense services should serve as guidelines to local legislative authorities in adopting standards. [2005 c 157 § 2; 1989 c 409 § 4.]

**RCW 10.101.040 Selection of defense attorneys.** City attorneys, county prosecutors, and law enforcement officers shall not select the attorneys who will provide indigent defense services. [1989 c 409 § 5.]

**RCW 10.101.050 Appropriated funds—Application, reports.** The Washington state office of public defense shall disburse appropriated funds to counties and cities for the purpose of improving the quality of public defense services. Counties may apply for up to their pro

rata share as set forth in RCW 10.101.060 provided that counties conform to application procedures established by the office of public defense and improve the quality of services for both juveniles and adults. Cities may apply for moneys pursuant to the grant program set forth in RCW 10.101.080. In order to receive funds, each applying county or city must require that attorneys providing public defense services attend training approved by the office of public defense at least once per calendar year. Each applying county or city shall report the expenditure for all public defense services in the previous calendar year, as well as case statistics for that year, including per attorney caseloads, and shall provide a copy of each current public defense contract to the office of public defense with its application. Each individual or organization that contracts to perform public defense services for a county or city shall report to the county or city hours billed for nonpublic defense legal services in the previous calendar year, including number and types of private cases. [2005 c 157 § 3.]

**RCW 10.101.060 Appropriated funds—Use requirements.** (1) (a)

Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose, the office of public defense shall disburse to applying counties that meet the requirements of RCW 10.101.050 designated funds under this chapter on a pro rata basis pursuant to the formula set forth in RCW 10.101.070 and shall disburse to eligible cities, funds pursuant to RCW 10.101.080. Each fiscal year for which it receives state funds under this chapter, a county or city must document to the office of public defense that it is meeting the standards for provision of indigent defense services as endorsed by the Washington state bar association or that the funds received under this chapter have been used to make appreciable demonstrable improvements in the delivery of public defense services, including the following:

(i) Adoption by ordinance of a legal representation plan that addresses the factors in RCW 10.101.030. The plan must apply to any contract or agency providing indigent defense services for the county or city;

(ii) Requiring attorneys who provide public defense services to attend training under RCW 10.101.050;

(iii) Requiring attorneys who handle the most serious cases to meet specified qualifications as set forth in the Washington state bar association endorsed standards for public defense services or participate in at least one case consultation per case with office of public defense resource attorneys who are so qualified. The most serious cases include all cases of murder in the first or second degree, persistent offender cases, and class A felonies. This subsection (1) (a) (iii) does not apply to cities receiving funds under RCW 10.101.050 through 10.101.080;

(iv) Requiring contracts to address the subject of compensation for extraordinary cases;

(v) Identifying funding specifically for the purpose of paying experts (A) for which public defense attorneys may file ex parte motions, or (B) which should be specifically designated within a public defender agency budget;

(vi) Identifying funding specifically for the purpose of paying investigators (A) for which public defense attorneys may file ex parte

motions, and (B) which should be specifically designated within a public defender agency budget.

(b) The cost of providing counsel in cases where there is a conflict of interest shall not be borne by the attorney or agency who has the conflict.

(2) The office of public defense shall determine eligibility of counties and cities to receive state funds under this chapter. If a determination is made that a county or city receiving state funds under this chapter did not substantially comply with this section, the office of public defense shall notify the county or city of the failure to comply and unless the county or city contacts the office of public defense and substantially corrects the deficiencies within ninety days after the date of notice, or some other mutually agreed period of time, the county's or city's eligibility to continue receiving funds under this chapter is terminated. If an applying county or city disagrees with the determination of the office of public defense as to the county's or city's eligibility, the county or city may file an appeal with the advisory committee of the office of public defense within thirty days of the eligibility determination. The decision of the advisory committee is final. [2005 c 157 § 4.]

**RCW 10.101.070 County moneys.** The moneys shall be distributed to each county determined to be eligible to receive moneys by the office of public defense as determined under this section. Ninety percent of the funding appropriated shall be designated as "county moneys" and shall be distributed as follows:

(1) Six percent of the county moneys appropriated shall be distributed as a base allocation among the eligible counties. A county's base allocation shall be equal to this six percent divided by the total number of eligible counties.

(2) Ninety-four percent of the county moneys appropriated shall be distributed among the eligible counties as follows:

(a) Fifty percent of this amount shall be distributed on a pro rata basis to each eligible county based upon the population of the county as a percentage of the total population of all eligible counties; and

(b) Fifty percent of this amount shall be distributed on a pro rata basis to each eligible county based upon the annual number of criminal cases filed in the county superior court as a percentage of the total annual number of criminal cases filed in the superior courts of all eligible counties.

(3) Under this section:

(a) The population of the county is the most recent number determined by the office of financial management;

(b) The annual number of criminal cases filed in the county superior court is determined by the most recent annual report of the courts of Washington, as published by the office of the administrator for the courts;

(c) Distributions and eligibility for distributions in the 2005-2007 biennium shall be based on 2004 figures for the annual number of criminal cases that are filed as described under (b) of this subsection. Future distributions shall be based on the most recent figures for the annual number of criminal cases that are filed as described under (b) of this subsection. [2005 c 157 § 5.]

**RCW 10.101.080 City moneys.** The moneys under RCW 10.101.050 shall be distributed to each city determined to be eligible under this section by the office of public defense. Ten percent of the funding appropriated shall be designated as "city moneys" and distributed as follows:

(1) The office of public defense shall administer a grant program to select the cities eligible to receive city moneys. Incorporated cities may apply for grants. Applying cities must conform to the requirements of RCW 10.101.050 and 10.101.060.

(2) City moneys shall be distributed in a timely manner to accomplish the goals of the grants.

(3) Criteria for award of grants shall be established by the office of public defense after soliciting input from the association of Washington cities. Award of the grants shall be determined by the office of public defense. [2007 c 59 § 1; 2005 c 157 § 6.]

**RCW 10.101.900 Construction—Chapter applicable to state registered domestic partnerships—2009 c 521.** For the purposes of this chapter, the terms spouse, marriage, marital, husband, wife, widow, widower, next of kin, and family shall be interpreted as applying equally to state registered domestic partnerships or individuals in state registered domestic partnerships as well as to marital relationships and married persons, and references to dissolution of marriage shall apply equally to state registered domestic partnerships that have been terminated, dissolved, or invalidated, to the extent that such interpretation does not conflict with federal law. Where necessary to implement chapter 521, Laws of 2009, gender-specific terms such as husband and wife used in any statute, rule, or other law shall be construed to be gender neutral, and applicable to individuals in state registered domestic partnerships. [2009 c 521 § 30.]