

RCW 2.70.120 Law student rural public defense program. (1)

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of public defense shall administer a law student rural public defense program. The program shall coordinate with one or more law schools to place law students who are eligible to practice as a licensed legal intern under Washington state admission and practice rule 9 and/or recent law school graduates as legal interns with experienced public defense attorneys located in underserved areas and rural areas of the state. The program must allow the intern to gain real-world public defense experience under the mentorship of the experienced public defense attorney, including active representation and litigation opportunities, with the purpose of encouraging the intern to consider, or not be deterred from pursuing, employment opportunities in public defense in underserved areas and rural areas of Washington state. The internship may be structured to correspond with time periods relevant to the academic calendar. Eligible internship placements shall include government and nonprofit public defense agencies as well as private firms that contract to provide public defense services.

(2) Contracts established by the office of public defense under this section shall include monthly compensation and housing stipends for program participants. Contracts may include partial reimbursement for the supervising attorney. [2024 c 293 s 2.]

Finding—Intent—2024 c 293: "The legislature finds that the lack of availability of public defense attorneys and deputy prosecutors is an increasing problem in Washington and neighboring states which threatens the ability of court systems to process criminal filings, particularly within rural areas. The legislature intends to encourage law students to enter public defense practice and prosecution and to remove barriers to practice in underserved areas and rural areas of the state." [2024 c 293 s 1.]