

State of Alaska FY2023 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Administration Legal and Advocacy Services Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary

Legal and Advocacy Services Results Delivery Unit

Contribution to Department's Mission

- Provide legal advocacy and guardian services to vulnerable Alaskans.
- To provide constitutionally mandated legal representation to indigent clients appointed by the court.

Major RDU Accomplishments in 2021

- Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) created the Rural Defense Section to better represent rural communities and reduce contractor costs.
- OPA Laid the groundwork for reorganizing the public guardian section for increased efficiency.
- Public Defenders Agency (PDA) established multiple remote support positions to ensure effective delivery of services in areas with difficulty recruiting or with limited bandwidth to complete tasks in support of attorneys.
- PDA Successfully reduced Agency vacancy rate for attorney positions with aggressive recruitment efforts.

Key RDU Challenges

Increased workloads – Due to the inherently unpredictable nature of workloads and increase in caseloads, it is a significant challenge for OPA and PDA to maintain and provide core services to clients as efficiently as possible. Both agencies, are considered “down flow” agencies in that they react to the actions of the other state agencies and systems (i.e., the Office of Children's Services, Adult Protective Services, the Attorney General Human Services Section, the District Attorney's Office, the Court System, and other public and private entities). Neither agency has control over the number of cases coming from the other agencies. The unpredictability of caseload assignments makes it difficult to accurately forecast caseload increases and costs for upcoming years. If the current trend of increased caseloads and backlog caused by COVID-19 continues, many agency sections will struggle to meet the increased demands without additional resources, resulting in inefficiencies for participants trying to provide services for some of Alaska's most vulnerable adults and children.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2023

Criminal Defense Caseloads – Both OPA and PDA are experiencing increases in criminal trial cases due to increasing crime and an increase in prosecutions.

Child Advocacy Caseloads – OPA will continue entering into appropriate partnerships with community groups to expand the CASA program and specifically target Alaska Native CASA volunteers for recruitment in order to continue to assist the Guardians ad Litem with their increased caseloads. OPA is currently in discussions with several tribes to forge a collaborative arrangement and recruit CASA volunteers for both state and tribal courts.

Electronic Receipt – PDA will continue to seek agreements with other departments and agencies that enable electronic receipt and processing of discovery.

Digital Solutions - PDA will continue to work with the Department of Corrections on mechanisms to enable video meetings with clients.

Contact Information

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**Legal and Advocacy Services
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2021 Actuals				FY2022 Management Plan				FY2023 Governor			
	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	UGF+DGF Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds
Formula Expenditures None.												
Non-Formula Expenditures Office of Public Advocacy	28,884.1	1,172.3	257.5	30,313.9	29,985.3	697.3	259.8	30,942.4	29,687.3	672.0	809.8	31,169.1
Public Defender Agency	27,925.9	1,423.1	0.0	29,349.0	30,874.4	622.5	0.0	31,496.9	30,722.7	1,221.9	0.0	31,944.6
Totals	56,810.0	2,595.4	257.5	59,662.9	60,859.7	1,319.8	259.8	62,439.3	60,410.0	1,893.9	809.8	63,113.7

Legal and Advocacy Services
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2022 Management Plan to FY2023 Governor

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>Unrestricted Gen (UGF)</u>	<u>Designated Gen (DGF)</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2022 Management Plan	58,345.4	2,514.3	1,319.8	259.8	62,439.3
One-time items:					
-Office of Public Advocacy	0.0	0.0	-95.6	0.0	-95.6
-Public Defender Agency	0.0	0.0	-86.0	0.0	-86.0
Adjustments which continue current level of service:					
-Office of Public Advocacy	-548.0	0.0	70.3	0.0	-477.7
-Public Defender Agency	-580.4	0.0	-14.6	0.0	-595.0
Proposed budget increases:					
-Office of Public Advocacy	250.0	0.0	0.0	550.0	800.0
-Public Defender Agency	428.7	0.0	700.0	0.0	1,128.7
FY2023 Governor	57,895.7	2,514.3	1,893.9	809.8	63,113.7