



Annual report: Public defender details progress

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After serving you for two years as Fourth Judicial Circuit public defender, it is my privilege to provide this Annual Report.

We will continue working hard to ensure that this state agency is fiscally responsible and managed with utmost efficiency.

The clients we represent are provided quality and effective advocacy; and we will continue to offer greater public service through active community outreach and engagement.

Here are some highlights for 2010:

- Implementation of the Resource Recovery Program. In 2010, it collected \$732,239, a 61.9 percent increase from the previous year.
- The PD Pro Bono Opportunities program launched last year. It cuts our per-case cost, gives our clients better attention and improves the legal community.
- Implementation of a Digital Deposition system; estimated to save nearly \$200,000 per year.
- Due to legislative cuts to Florida public defenders, a 6 percent cut to office vendors was imposed in February and remains in place. No interruption of office functions occurred.
- At the end of the state fiscal year 2010, the office carried over \$366,452 in surplus funding. The unlikely budget surplus came as unforeseen budget cuts were imposed.
- In 2010, the office cut more than \$162,000 from discretionary operating costs
- The office's win-percentage at trial has grown from 12 percent in 2008 to more than 20 percent in 2010.

- Strong advocacy for Duval County Drug Court to ensure substantial cost saving to taxpayers and a proven, significant reduction in recidivism rates of those charged on drug-related incidents
- An Enhanced Investigations Unit gives attorneys the unique advantage of certified law enforcement investigators who have great knowledge of Sheriff's Office operations and procedures.
- A nationally recognized Juvenile Defense Unit has enabled significant system reform while providing young clients effective advocacy. A unique mentoring function has been established.

In 2010 ,we worked tirelessly with the public:

- Provided ex-felons with workshops on record sealing/expunction to ease re-entry to society.
- Reached out to community/neighborhood leaders (CPACs) to open communication lines.
- Developed and presented Legal Ramifications of the Electronic Age to numerous groups; it is designed to educate parents and children about dangers of Internet and other technology.

It has been a busy and productive two years. I am pleased with the hard work our staff has done on behalf of our clients, the local taxpayers and the communities in Northeast Florida.

We will continue fighting for justice in the courtrooms, incorporating new fiscally responsible practices into the administration and reaching out to the people we are privileged to serve.

About the author

Matt Shirk is the public defender for the Fourth Judicial Circuit serving Clay, Duval and Nassau counties.