

Mark W. Rutherford, Chairman  
*Indianapolis*  
Hon. Mary Ellen Diekhoff  
*Bloomington*  
Representative Ryan Dvorak  
*South Bend*  
Hon. Kelsey B. Hanlon  
*Spencer*  
David J. Hensel  
*Indianapolis*

# Public Defender Commission



Senator Eric Koch  
*Bedford*  
Larry Landis  
*Indianapolis*  
Hon. Steven P. Meyer  
*Lafayette*  
Senator Gregory G. Taylor  
*Indianapolis*  
Representative Thomas Washburne  
*Darmstadt*

309 W Washington Street Suite 501 • Indianapolis, IN 46204

www.in.gov/publicdefender • ph 317-233-6908 • fax 317-233-9939

## Announcement

**From: Mark Rutherford, Chair, Indiana Public Defender Commission**

**Date: 8/16/17**

**RE: Formation of the Indiana Task Force on Public Defense**

Last fall, the Sixth Amendment Center of Boston, Massachusetts issued a lengthy and detailed report on Indiana's public defense system that raised serious concerns about the way in which defense services are delivered in Indiana. A second report, the result of a federal planning grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), called into question how youth in the delinquency system in Indiana are represented, and in some cases, not represented. The recent, dramatic increase in our state's CHINS and TPR filings have created greater demand for representation and placed a strain on many of our local defender systems and county budgets.

The Indiana Public Defender Commission is tasked with making recommendations regarding the provision of indigent defense in Indiana, and for this reason has taken the lead to assemble a diverse group of leaders to further study these concerns and develop findings and recommendations. The Honorable Judge Larry McKinney has agreed to chair this effort, which will conduct a series of meetings over the next year. A formal invitation has been sent to 17 individuals to serve on what will be known as the "Indiana Task Force on Public Defense" and to assist in helping us meet the challenges faced by our current public defense system. The group has scheduled its first meeting in early September.

The Task Force will be an independent body comprised of individuals with current or past experience from all three branches of government, law schools, the private bar, public defense agencies, sheriffs, prosecutors and other stakeholder groups. It will also include a team of local and national advisors to provide consultation on potential solutions to improve Indiana's system of defense. The process will be transparent and seek the contributions of multiple stakeholder groups who can provide valuable insights into current policies and practices. The Task Force's goal will be to complete its work and provide a report and recommendations by August 2018.

Ultimately, Indiana's system must ensure that it meets the state's constitutional obligations, while ensuring a system that is cost effective, standards driven, and ensures accountability and oversight. Equal justice for all depends to a very great degree upon a constitutionally effective system for the provision of an appropriate and timely defense for those who cannot afford lawyers.

Kim Tandy has been retained to provide technical assistance to the Task Force. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kim at [ktandy1@pdc.in.gov](mailto:ktandy1@pdc.in.gov). For questions related to the Commission please contact Derrick Mason at [Derrick.Mason@pdcom.in.gov](mailto:Derrick.Mason@pdcom.in.gov).

