

SPD-ACD: Newsletter June 2026

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Assigned Counsel Division Newsletter

June 2026



New ACD Hire

Please welcome Melissa!

The ACD team welcomes another full-time Financial Specialist - Melissa. She previously worked at a mortgage company where she gained valuable experience in financial processes, attention to detail, and customer-focused service. She looks forward to bringing those skills to SPD, and contributing to the important work you all do.

While the ACD team is now fully staffed, training takes time. Please be patient with the auditors as we work towards reducing payment times.

Berkos Award

Nominations for 2026 Award now open!

The WI SPD Board is pleased to announce the opening of the nomination period for the 8th Annual Danny Berkos Award. Attorney Berkos served for many years as the Public Defender Board Chair and, as a criminal defense lawyer, was a zealous advocate for public defender clients. The Berkos award recognizes a member of the Assigned Counsel pool for their exceptional service to indigent defense.

[Link](#) to nomination Google Form.

The ideal candidate will have consistently displayed great dedication and excellence representing SPD clients and by working to help improve services for indigent defense. Nominees must be private bar attorneys accepting SPD cases. The recipient will be chosen by members of the SPD Board and the award will be presented during the SPD's Annual Criminal Defense Conference in November.

Nominations should be submitted by **July 31**. Nominations that include greater detail will carry more weight with the selection committee.

New SPD Training Director

Congratulations to Colleen Cullen!

Colleen Cullen is back at the State Public Defenders as the new Training Director. Colleen succeeds Kara Rolf, who has transitioned from the training department to serve as the Regional Attorney Manager for the Racine region. You may recognize Colleen from her previous work in the Milwaukee Trial Office or her past training contributions to the WI SPD.



Any SPD CLE reporting should be directed to ACD, but if you have any questions about trainings or their event information, please contact the **SPD Training Division**.



Contact with ACD

If you have a question on billing, scope of appointment, an expense request, etc. **please include the SPD ID and the client name.** Even if your question seems vague, the specific case will give us context and our answer might depend on it. Having that information upfront will avoid extra communications.



Lodging - State Rate & Tax Exemption

If you have been approved for a hotel stay you should receive a letter from ACD. This letter states that you are traveling for state business, and therefore should receive the state rate and state tax exemption. Your OAC is proof of your state business (please redact client identifying information).

If the hotel offers breakfast, ACD does not reimburse for that meal.

Receipts are always required, and should be sent to **ACD@opd.wi.gov**



Interpreters/Translators

Locating Services

- State Vendors – Use the resources on the Google Form linked below
 - SPD Interpretation Resources for Private Bar
 - SPD Fiscal has already established accounts with all the listed vendors
 - [nothing will be “submitted” - this form is a tool to determine the needed resource and provide approved option(s)]
- If additional options or resources not listed on the form are needed, please reach out to the ACD program supervisor

Rates for Services

- State Vendors - rates have been pre-negotiated with the approved vendors, and no additional fiscal or division approval is required.
- Other vendors - rates vary depending on the language
 - \$50/hour for travel more than 30 miles one way from interpreter’s principal place of business

How to Request Funding & Services

- State Vendors - no Case Expense Request needed
- If the non-State vendor cost will be more than \$500
- Attorneys no longer need to complete or submit the SPD Interpreter Request form or send it on to the service provider.



Investigative Searches

The SPD provides funding for private investigators at a rate of \$50 per hour plus expenses. We have recently noted "search fees" being charged at rates up to \$35. **The SPD standard reimbursement for these searches is \$3.** If the actual cost associated with a specific search exceeds \$3, please provide an itemized invoice documenting the charge. If this documentation is not provided, the invoice will be adjusted accordingly.



Submission of Third Party Invoices

When a third-party invoice is submitted to ACD@opd.wi.gov it must **come from the attorney not the third party contractor.** This lets the auditors know the attorney reviewed and confirmed the services billed.



Discovery Related Expenses

Discovery costs should be billed directly to the SPD by the service provider.

If a USB or hard drive is needed for discovery, please see the below reimbursable rates:

- 16GB or smaller - \$5
- 32GB to 64GB - \$10
- 128 GB or larger - Actual Cost*
- Hard Drives - Actual Cost*

*Documentation must accompany the invoice to show actual costs and justify the larger USB/hard drive needed for discovery.

If a DA's office is making it difficult for you to obtain discovery on an SPD case, please notify ACD.



Reimbursement for Texts

- ACD will reimburse attorneys .01 hour (36 seconds) per text message.
 - If an attorney is claiming more than .01 hour per text message, in the timeslip the attorney should identify the professional legal services being conducted via text messaging.
- In the timeslip, attorneys should itemize the number of text messages separately for which they are requesting reimbursement. **(Do not bundle with other items such as phone calls, etc.)**
- ACD may also request copies of the text messages for auditing purposes.



2080 Hour Rule

The SPD administrative code limits billable time to 2,080 hours per calendar year. Please track your time closely; hours exceeding this limit are non-reimbursable without prior approval.

The 2,080-hour limit represents the standard equivalent of a 40-hour workweek for a full calendar year. The Board established this threshold based on several critical professional considerations to ensure that private bar lawyers are not overburdened and maintain a sustainable practice, and that every client receives diligent and competent representation.

Share the Wins!

SPD would love to hear about, and share, any "wins" you have. Whether it be a motion hearing or a trial - send [ACD](#) a selfie and summary of your win (excluding confidential info of course)!



Attorney Burnout

In the practice of Criminal Defense, especially with the indigent defense system, there is always work to do. What can you do to avoid experiencing burnout?

It is easier said than done, but it is imperative to take care of yourself. Self-care not only benefits you, but allows for more zealous representation of clients.

Below is a podcast that addresses attorney burnout.

Life and Law: Your Practice. Your Life. Your Terms. [Episode 19 "Lawyer Burnout \(Symptoms, Sources & Solutions\)"](#)

If you have any podcasts, articles, or tips that may be useful to others, feel free to pass them along to ACD!

Upcoming Events

SPD Annual Conference | Nov 12-13, 2026 | Milwaukee, WI

The annual conference is a great opportunity to earn CLE's, meet other attorneys who practice indigent defense (both staff & other private bar) and meet your ACD team!

The [SPD Training page](#) will have more information as it gets closer.



Assigned Counsel Division

Wisconsin State Public Defenders

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