

State of Wisconsin
Wisconsin State Public Defenders
Recruitment and Retention Action Plan
July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2028

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Acknowledgment

I have reviewed and I approve this Recruitment and Retention Action Plan. I endorse the goals outlined in the plan and I am committed to supporting implementation of this plan. I affirm the State Public Defenders' office is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity, freedom from discrimination, and affirmative action in compliance with state laws and policies and federal laws.

Appointing Authority

Name: Jennifer Bias

Title: State Public Defender

Date: 06/05/2026

Signature: *Jennifer Bias*

Agency Roles and Responsibilities

Agency Appointing Authority

- Communicates direction and vision to agency leadership, encouraging their involvement in and commitment to the agency's action plan.
- Appoints agency action plan advisory committee members and an agency action plan officer.
- Reviews and approves the agency's action plan.
- Seeks advice from the agency's action plan advisory committee on related topics and issues.
- Provides support and resources to facilitate implementation of plan goals and actions.

Name: Jennifer Bias

Title: State Public Defender

Agency Action Plan Officer

Agency action plan officers are agency employees designated by the agency appointing authority to serve as a designated point of contact and project manager for the agency's action plan.

Duties may include:

- Guiding action plan development, including engaging stakeholders outside the agency's action plan advisory committee.
- Leading action plan implementation, including ensuring a communications plan is developed and executed.
- Monitoring action plan enactment and progress, including coordinating activities required by the action plan and ensuring action plan goals are met in a timely manner or are updated appropriately if conditions shift.
- Communicating with agency leadership and employees to provide updates on action plan activities and status.

Name: Ricardo Santiago Rodriguez

Title: HR Specialist

Agency Action Plan Advisory Committee

An agency's action plan advisory committee, made up of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee of the State Public Defenders' office, is a group of agency

employees selected by the appointing authority to lead the action plan development and implementation process.

Duties may include:

- Creating the agency's action plan, including soliciting feedback from other agency employees to inform the development process.
- Launching the agency's action plan, including a communications plan to ensure all agency employees are made aware of the plan's goals.
- Implementing the agency's action plan, including continued communications with agency employees to share information and solicit participation in goal-related activities.
- Advising agency leadership on programming related to action plan activities.

Names:

Allison Markoski - Assistant State Public Defender Attorney

Destiny Rivera - Paralegal

Breanna Magallones - Assistant State Public Defender Attorney

Bethany Van Drie - Legal Secretary

Workforce Analysis

Agency Overview

- Total Employee Count: 679
 - Permanent Classified Employee Count: 252
 - Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Total: 246.75
- Average Years of State Service: 10
- Average Age: 44
- Average Hourly Pay Rate: \$30.73
- Median Hourly Pay Rate: \$29.36
- Vacancy Rate: 2.6%
- Turnover Rate: 9.4%
- Proportion of Fair Labor and Standards Act (FLSA) Eligible Employees: 80.95%
- Proportion of “Protective” Occupation Employees: 0%
- Proportion of Executive/Management Employees: 1.59%
- Proportion of Supervisory (Non-management/Executive) Employees: 12.3%

Recruitment Data

Table 1: Applicant and Hire Data by Gender

Gender	Applicant Count	Applicant Proportion	Hire Count	Hire Proportion
Male	339	30.54%	7	25%
Female	744	67.03%	21	75%
Not Indicated	27	2.43%	N/A	N/A

Table 2: Applicant and Hire Data by Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	Applicant Count	Applicant Proportion	Hire Count	Hire Proportion
American Indian or Alaskan Native	14	1.26%	0	0%
Asian	58	5.23%	0	0%
Black or African American	105	9.46%	1	3.57%
Hispanic or Latino	90	8.11%	3	10.71%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	5	0.45%	0	0%
Two or More Races	32	2.88%	0	0%
White	780	70.27%	24	85.71%
Not Indicated	26	2.34%	0	0%

Table 3: Applicant and Hire Data by Disability Status

Disability Status	Applicant Count	Applicant Proportion	Hire Count	Hire Proportion
Disabled	190	17.12%	6	21.43%
Severely Disabled	N/A	N/A	0	0%
Not Indicated	920	82.88%	22	78.57%

Table 4: Applicant and Hire Data by Wisconsin Works (W-2) Status

Wisconsin Works (W-2) Status	Applicant Count	Applicant Proportion	Hire Count	Hire Proportion
Eligible for W-2	67	6.04%	0	0%
Enrolled in W-2	N/A	N/A	0	0%

Table 5: Applicant and Hire Data by Veteran Status

Veteran Status	Applicant Count	Applicant Proportion	Hire Count	Hire Proportion
Veteran	63	5.68%	1	3.57%
Disabled Veteran	24	2.16%	0	0%
Not Indicated	1047	94.32%	27	96.43%

Employee Data

Table 6: Agency Gender Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Gender	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Male	60	23.81%	51.9%	50.1%
Female	192	76.19%	47.5%	49.9%
Not Indicated	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 7: Agency Race and Ethnicity Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Race and Ethnicity	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.4%	1.3%	1.2%
Asian	6	2.38%	2.9%	3.5%
Black or African American	13	5.16%	4.8%	6.7%
Hispanic or Latino	26	10.32%	7.0%	8.4%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%	0.04%	0.1%
Two or More Races	3	1.19%	5.5%	2.4%
White	202	80.16%	83.3%	86.1%
Not Indicated	1	0.4%	N/A	N/A

Table 8: Agency Disability Status Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Disability Status	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Disabled	30	11.9%	5.7%	8.7%
Severely Disabled	2	0.79%	N/A	N/A
Not Indicated	222	88.1%	94.1%	91.3%

Table 9: Agency Veteran Status Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Veteran Status	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Veteran	12	4.76%	4.6%	5.0%
Disabled Veteran	2	0.79%	N/A	N/A
Not Indicated	240	95.24%	95.4%	95.0%

Table 4: Agency Employee Age Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Age	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Under 20	0	0%	N/A	20.8%
20 – 29 years old	46	18.25%	N/A	13.0%
30 – 39 years old	55	21.83%	N/A	12.9%
40 – 49 years old	51	20.24%	N/A	12.2%
50 – 59 years old	69	27.38%	N/A	11.8%
60 plus years old	31	12.3%	N/A	29.9%

Table 5: Agency Years of Service Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Years of Service	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
0 – 4 years	102	40.48%	N/A	N/A
5 – 9 years	46	18.25%	N/A	N/A
10 – 14 years	41	16.27%	N/A	N/A
15 – 19 years	16	6.35%	N/A	N/A
20 – 24 years	15	5.95%	N/A	N/A
25 – 29 years	20	7.94%	N/A	N/A
30 – 35 years	7	2.78%	N/A	N/A
More Than 35 years	5	1.98%	N/A	N/A

Table 6: Agency Separation Status Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Separation Status	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Voluntary	20	8.08%	N/A	N/A
Involuntary*	0	0%	N/A	N/A
Retirement	3	1.21%	N/A	N/A

*Involuntary separations include employer separations, employee death, and medical separations.

Table 7: Agency Retirement Eligibility Compared to the Labor Market and State Population

Retirement Eligibility	Agency Count	Agency Proportion	Wisconsin Labor Market	Wisconsin Population
Immediate	14	5.56%	N/A	N/A
Within 5 years	44	17.46%	N/A	N/A
Within 10 years	79	31.35%	N/A	N/A
More than 10 years	173	68.65%	N/A	N/A

Geographic Data

Table 8: Agency Employee Work and Home Location by County

County	# of Employees Headquartered in County	Proportion of Employees Headquartered in County	# of Employees Residing in County	Proportion of Employees Residing in County
Adams	0	0%	0	0%
Ashland	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Barron	4	1.59%	3	1.19%

County	# of Employees Headquartered in County	Proportion of Employees Headquartered in County	# of Employees Residing in County	Proportion of Employees Residing in County
Bayfield	0	0%	0	0%
Brown	9	3.57%	10	3.97%
Buffalo	0	0%	0	0%
Burnett	0	0%	2	0.79%
Calumet	0	0%	1	0.4%
Chippewa	0	0%	0	0%
Clark	0	0%	2	0.79%
Columbia	3	1.19%	2	0.79%
Crawford	0	0%	0	0%
Dane	59	23.41%	49	19.44%
Dodge	2	0.79%	1	0.4%
Door	0	0%	0	0%
Douglas	2	0.79%	0	0%
Dunn	0	0%	0	0%
Eau Claire	5	1.98%	9	3.57%
Florence	0	0%	0	0%
Fond du Lac	6	2.38%	4	1.59%
Forest	0	0%	0	0%
Grant	3	1.19%	4	1.59%
Green	1	0.4%	2	0.79%
Green Lake	0	0%	2	0.79%
Iowa	0	0%	0	0%
Iron	0	0%	0	0%
Jackson	3	1.19%	2	0.79%
Jefferson	1	0.4%	4	1.59%
Juneau	0	0%	0	0%
Kenosha	8	3.17%	6	2.38%
Kewaunee	0	0%	0	0%
La Crosse	6	2.38%	5	1.98%
Lafayette	0	0%	0	0%
Langlade	0	0%	0	0%
Lincoln	4	1.59%	4	1.59%
Manitowoc	3	1.19%	5	1.98%
Marathon	5	1.98%	4	1.59%
Marinette	1	0.4%	1	0.4%

County	# of Employees Headquartered in County	Proportion of Employees Headquartered in County	# of Employees Residing in County	Proportion of Employees Residing in County
Marquette	0	0%	0	0%
Menominee	0	0%	0	0%
Milwaukee	49	19.44%	44	17.46%
Monroe	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Oconto	0	0%	1	0.4%
Oneida	3	1.19%	2	0.79%
Outagamie	7	2.78%	6	2.38%
Ozaukee	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Pepin	0	0%	0	0%
Pierce	0	0%	2	0.79%
Polk	0	0%	0	0%
Portage	4	1.59%	3	1.19%
Price	0	0%	0	0%
Racine	10	3.97%	13	5.16%
Richland	0	0%	0	0%
Rock	9	3.57%	9	3.57%
Rusk	0	0%	0	0%
St. Croix	4	1.59%	1	0.4%
Sauk	4	1.59%	4	1.59%
Sawyer	0	0%	0	0%
Shawano	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Sheboygan	5	1.98%	5	1.98%
Taylor	0	0%	0	0%
Trempealeau	0	0%	0	0%
Vernon	0	0%	1	0.4%
Vilas	0	0%	1	0.4%
Walworth	3	1.19%	3	1.19%
Washburn	5	1.98%	1	0.4%
Washington	3	1.19%	4	1.59%
Waukesha	9	3.57%	11	4.37%
Waupaca	0	0%	1	0.4%
Waushara	0	0%	0	0%
Winnebago	5	1.98%	4	1.59%
Wood	3	1.19%	3	1.19%
Out of State	0	0%	7	2.78%

Trends in Employee Data

Table 9: Changes in Gender Over Time

Gender	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Male	(+5)	(+1.2%)	(0)	(-1.5%)
Female	(+4)	(-1.2%)	(+15)	(+1.5%)
Not Indicated	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 10: Changes in Race and Ethnicity Over Time

Race and Ethnicity	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
American Indian or Alaskan Native	(0)	(0%)	(0)	(0%)
Asian	(0)	(-0.1%)	(+1)	(+0.3%)
Black or African American	(0)	(-0.2%)	(-1)	(-0.7%)
Hispanic or Latino	(+3)	(+0.9%)	(+3)	(+0.6%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	(0)	(0%)	(0)	(0%)
Two or More Races	(0)	(0%)	(+1)	(+0.3%)
White	(+6)	(-0.5%)	(+12)	(0%)
Not Indicated	(0)	(0%)	(-1)	(-0.4%)

Table 11: Changes in Disability Status Over Time

Disability Status	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Disabled	(+4)	(+1.2%)	(+11)	(+3.9%)
Severely Disabled	(-1)	(-0.4%)	(0)	(-0.1%)
Not Indicated	(+5)	(-1.2%)	(+4)	(-3.9%)

Table 12: Changes in Veteran Status Over Time

Veteran Status	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Veteran	(0)	(-0.2%)	(-1)	(-0.7%)
Disabled Veteran	(-1)	(-0.4%)	(0)	(-0.1%)
Not Indicated	(+9)	(+0.2%)	(+16)	(+0.7%)

Table 19: Changes in Age Over Time

Age	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Under 20	(0)	(0%)	(0)	(0%)
20 – 29 years old	(+2)	(+0.1%)	(+5)	(+1%)
30 – 39 years old	(+3)	(+0.4%)	(+9)	(+2.4%)
40 – 49 years old	(-6)	(-3.2%)	(-12)	(-6.3%)
50 – 59 years old	(+2)	(-0.2%)	(-2)	(-2.6%)
60 plus years old	(+8)	(+2.8%)	(+15)	(+5.6%)

Table 13: Changes in Years of Service Over Time

Years of Service	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
0 – 4 years	(+8)	(+1.8%)	(+15)	(+3.8%)
5 – 9 years	(-7)	(-3.6%)	(-9)	(-5%)
10 – 14 years	(+9)	(+3.1%)	(+17)	(+6.1%)
15 – 19 years	(0)	(-0.2%)	(+3)	(+0.9%)
20 – 24 years	(-8)	(-3.5%)	(-17)	(-7.5%)
25 – 29 years	(+8)	(+3%)	(+9)	(+3.3%)
30 – 35 years	(-3)	(-1.3%)	(-7)	(-3.1%)
More Than 35 Years	(+2)	(-1.3%)	(+4)	(+1.6%)

Table 14: Changes in Separation Status Over Time

Separation Status	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Voluntary	(-3)	(-1.6%)	(+2)	(+0.5%)
Involuntary*	(0)	(0%)	(0)	(0%)
Retirement	(-1)	(-0.5%)	(-6)	(-2.6%)

*Involuntary separations include employer separations, employee death, and medical separations.

Table 15: Changes in Retirement Eligibility Over Time

Retirement Eligibility	Count of One-Year Employee Change	Proportion of One-Year Employee Change	Count of Three-Year Employee Change	Proportion of Three-Year Employee Change
Immediate	(-1)	(-0.6%)	(+3)	(+0.9%)
Within 5 years	(+4)	(+1%)	(+9)	(+2.7%)
Within 10 years	(+3)	(+0.1%)	(+6)	(+0.5%)
More than 10 years	(+6)	(-0.1%)	(+9)	(-0.5%)

The information came from the Human Capital Management System on March 04, 2026.

Applicant, Hires, and Employee data 01/01/2025 – 12/31/2025.

The calendar years ending 12/31/2024 and 12/31/2025 represent the one-year comparable data. The years ending 12/31/2022 and 12/31/2025 were used for the three-year change comparison.

Wisconsin Works data was taken from the 2025 FY Wisconsin Works Annual Report

Goals

Goal 1: Recruitment

Increase the comprehensive candidate pool through efforts to broaden recruitment accessibility.

- This goal can be achieved by adding language and testimonials to job descriptions that affirm the agency's commitment to a comprehensive candidate pool. More total reward information, such as links/descriptions of benefits and career maps, can also be added to increase transparency.
- Maintain and establish relationships with legal organizations (WACDL, BBE, LEO, LASA, QLaw, State Bar, law schools, etc.) to include links to the SPD career page/Wisc.Jobs postings, build relationships with university law/social justice organizations to create a school to agency pipeline, to better understand impact and increase our physical presence at recruitment events.
- This goal is challenging because of the geographical mapping of Wisconsin and the equitable education standards for applicants to receive the training or experience needed to qualify. However, this is actionable due to the many connections the SPD has with legal organizations such as BBE, LEO, LASA, QLaw and others that contribute to a comprehensive candidate pool of legal professionals in Wisconsin.
- This data is informed by the Applicant, Hires, and Employee data from the WI Department of Administration.
- The target completion date is June 30, 2028.

Goal 2: Retention

The training department will implement a robust three year mentorship program for new staff entering the agency to decrease turnover of incoming staff. Utilizing volunteers and pairing new staff with experienced staff who are in a similar demographic and practice areas.

- Progress will be tracked by conducting milestone check-ins (3,6,9, then yearly) with both mentees and mentors, conducted through either in-person meetings or virtually. We will also conduct stay surveys at the end of the mentorship program.
- Survey responses will be analyzed to identify trends and patterns. Maintain timely evaluations of these SPD staff and provide transparency in ratings scales to avoid subjective capping of scaling performance. As well as validating concerns in SPD staff members' everyday struggles (generational gaps, racial issues, mental health, burn-out, and niche concerns of rural practice)
- This data is informed by turnover rates in new employees, exit surveys and demographic dashboards provided by the department of personnel management.

- Allowing new staff to have another resource through their mentor for advice and guidance. Equipping employees with knowledge through on-the-job training and developmental opportunities, while providing managers with new training to mentor and manage generational gaps between new and older staff.
- The goal is challenging because rural defenders (legal professionals in rural settings within the state of Wisconsin) lack geographic and demographic representation for mentors. Additionally, available time for most legal professionals can be limited due to their substantial workloads. Furthermore, a lack of staff and someone to shepherd this endeavor are limiting factors.
- It satisfies the objective by providing guidance and support directly from the agency that affects turnover rates in the long-term.
- The target completion date is June 30, 2028.

Goal 3: Culture

Stress Management, wellness programs, and mindfulness training made available to all employees.

- Find new, focused resources to help target burn-out and mental health issues, and provide data to support staff.
- Progress will be tracked by EAP registration numbers alongside new vendor data from Accentra. This will include providing testimonials from staff members who are EAP users.
- The goal is challenging because there is a high level of perceived stigma around mental health support at the agency, and an overall culture of mistrust of EAP and programs that support mental well-being. While we will be able to utilize our free resources with the EAP and Well Wisconsin to offer some of the training, employee buy-in and participation will be a challenge.
- This data is informed by the stay surveys conducted by SPD indicating that employees would find the time to take advantage of these if resources were made available.
- It directly satisfies the objective by re-enforcing the need to use internal resources to prevent burn out and other mental health challenges by utilizing resources like with EAP's 8 free sessions available for all staff.
- The target completion date is June 30, 2028

Goal 4: Veteran Hires

Establish a pipeline into legal advocacy and jobs through creating new connections with Veteran Affairs Services Officers throughout the state of Wisconsin for veteran outreach.

- Progress will be tracked by having a google sheet tracker and using Veteran Affairs Services Officers contact information to establish events and/or 1 on 1 screenings to develop the pipeline.
- This goal can be tracked further by sending surveys to incoming veteran applicants about how helpful and likely they would join SPD in the future or embark in legal services.
- The goal is challenging because of the lack of awareness of SPD and its opportunities for the Veteran Community.
- It directly satisfies the objective by explicitly focusing on recruiting and retaining employees who are veterans.
- This goal is informed by the demographic dashboard data provided by the STAR HCM system.
- The target completion date is June 30, 2028.

Goal 5: Wisconsin Works Hires

Increase and expand outreach of permanent classified employees who are eligible for participation in the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program during the action plan cycle (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2028).

- Progress will be tracked by monitoring HR recruitment data for candidates identifying as W-2 eligible.
- The goal is challenging because W-2 participants represent a small labor pool, but it is actionable due to the agency's commitment to affirmative action. Resources include partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Job Center of Wisconsin and W-2 service providers.
- It directly satisfies the objective by explicitly focusing on recruiting and retaining employees who are eligible for, or are participating in Wisconsin Works programming.
- The target completion date is June 30, 2028. Interim markers include establishing communication with DWD and W-2 service providers by Q1 2027 and posting at least three job announcements directly marketed to W-2 job seekers by Q4 2027.