

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 1

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE A-87 EXEMPTION TO COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT TO APPROVE PUBLIC DEFENDER CONTRACT WITH PARTNERS FOR JUSTICE AND ESTABLISH APPROPRIATIONS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On February 28, 2023 (6), the San Diego County Board (Board) authorized a single source exemption to competitive procurement for Public Defender (PD) to contract with Partners for Justice (PFJ) for juvenile client advocate services for one year and three option years. The contract was executed effective July 1, 2023 and embedded PFJ client advocates within the Primary Public Defender's Juvenile Justice Unit. On average, approximately 39 juvenile clients and their families receive client advocate services. Services include assistance with long-term housing resources, education support and school enrollment, job training or placement services, benefits enrollment, medical advocacy, access to in-custody services, release planning and more. Due to the positive results this program has achieved in the juvenile justice division, PD requests to expand these services to its adult division, which will lead to better outcomes for clients and their families and increase attorney efficiency.

Prior to the implementation of the program with PFJ, deputy public defenders performed these tasks themselves. Since the implementation of PFJ's client advocate services to PD's juvenile justice division, attorney time spent on support services for clients has decreased, allowing them to focus their time more exclusively on legal work. Today's request includes authorizing the Director of Purchasing and Contracting to enter into a one-year contract with PFJ beginning March 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 with three option years through 2030 to provide three client advocates to assist PD's adult client program and establish appropriations of \$400,000 from the Opioid Settlement Fund to the Office of the Public Defender, Services & Supplies.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. In accordance with Board Policy A-87 Procedure A.3, approve and authorize the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to enter into negotiations with Partners for Justice and, subject to successful negotiations and a determination of a fair and reasonable price, award contract for three client advocates to assist PD's adult client program for up to one year and three option periods through 2030 and an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contract as needed to reflect changes to requirements and funding.
2. Establish appropriations of \$400,000 from the Opioid Settlement Fund to the Office of the Public Defender, Services & Supplies, for contract for client advocate services and associated technical assistance March 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. **(4 VOTES)**

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's action seeks to reduce disparities across the criminal justice system by helping fulfill the needs of the Public Defender's (PD) indigent clients. A snapshot of the multitude and diverse array of needs experienced by San Diegans that cycle through the legal system is presented in a July 2025 report by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) titled "2024 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San

Diego Region”. Per the report, of the adult arrestees surveyed, three in four arrestees tested positive for a substance, including one in two that tested positive for methamphetamine. Additionally, a third of the arrestees reported a mental health diagnosis, and over two-thirds reported having experience with being unhoused.

Client advocates will support PD clients by connecting clients to a network of local services, community organizations, and civil attorneys. They will work with PD’s attorneys to reduce jail time and improve case outcomes, disrupting the cycle of poverty and incarceration. By addressing the non-legal challenges that clients face (i.e. poverty, unemployment, mental health needs, etc.), Client advocates offer the opportunity to restore and heal individuals, engage them with the community, help prevent repeat offenses, and promote justice, both within the legal system and without.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Part of the role of client advocates is to connect clients with resources to help them sustain themselves during and after experiences with the criminal justice system, as well as to reintegrate themselves back into the community. These resources include community-based social services related to addiction, physical and mental health, housing, employment, education, and finance as well as civil, family, and immigration legal resources. Client advocates will help lift barriers to supportive services caused by limited public awareness and lack of social connectivity.

This program would support the County's Sustainability Goal of providing just and equitable access to County services. Additionally, the program would be an investment in a chronically underserved community and would assist in building the resilience of a vulnerable population. Strengthening resilience is a key sustainability commitment in the County’s current Operational Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

If approved, this request will establish appropriations totaling \$400,000 in Public Defender for contracted client advocate services and associated technical assistance from March 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. Current year costs, estimated at \$100,000 have not been budgeted in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Operational Plan. Remaining appropriations (\$300,000) to cover option years costs for contracted services from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 will be included in the FY 2026-28 CAO Recommended Operational Plan in the Public Defender. The funding source will be the Opioid Settlement Fund. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, seconded by Supervisor Aguirre, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended, on Consent.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter