



# Department Budget Request: Budget Priorities

Listed in order of priority, Amounts in \$Thousands



### Mission

The Los Angeles County Public Defender provides Constitutionally mandated legal representation to defend the liberty interests of indigent people, to protect their rights and to advocate for their access to resources to be productive members of the community.

### Mandatory & Major Duties

- Represent adult clients charged with felony and misdemeanor offenses
- Represent youth clients in juvenile delinquency cases
- Represent adults in civil commitment cases
- Represent adults facing mental health commitments
- Represent respondents in CARE Court proceedings
- Provide community Record Clearing Services
- Represent clients in Post-Conviction matters
- Represent clients in pre-judgement appeals and writs

### Department Strategic Plan Exists?

[Strategic Plan](#)

### 2024-25 Budget (\$Thousands)

As of Supplemental Budget Phase

EXPENDITURES/APPROPRIATIONS	
Total Salaries & Employee Benefits	\$ 300,605
Total Services & Supplies	\$ 30,405
Other Charges	11,749
Cap Assets – Equip	50
Other Financing Uses	-
<b>TOTAL GROSS APPROP</b>	<b>\$ 342,809</b>
<b>Intrafund Transfers</b>	<b>2,936</b>
<b>TOTAL NET APPROP</b>	<b>\$ 339,873</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>44,443</b>
<b>NET COUNTY COST<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$ 295,430</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED POSITIONS</b>	<b>1,224</b>

#	Request Title/Short Descriptor	Fund Source	Gross Approp	less IFT	less Revenue	= NCC	Position Change	Board Priority	Directed By	Metrics Plan?
*	Other Ministerial Changes	NCC	(11,323)	-	(5,105)	(6,218)	-	-	n/a	N
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ (11,323)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ (5,105)</b>	<b>\$ (6,218)</b>	<b>-</b>			

LEGEND	Primary Use of Funding
	Service Delivery to the Public            Service Delivery to Other Departments            Administration
	<b>Funding Source</b> RO: Revenue Offset   NCC: Net County Cost Change   AFB: Available Fund Balance   DAFB: Department Available Fund Balance   CO: Carryover   Other - SBI: State Budget Impact

<sup>1</sup> Includes restricted and unrestricted locally generated revenues



**Tiering Definitions**

**TIER 1: Critical Unmet Needs**

Requests where, if unfunded in the upcoming budget year, a department would be prevented from meeting mandatory obligations imposed by settlement, contract, audit finding, new legislation, Board mandate, or imminently cause a health or safety risk.

*Detailed justification for critical unmet needs must be included in a department's budget requests submission.*

**TIER 2: Priority Unmet Needs**

Requests where, if unfunded in the upcoming budget year, a department would be prevented from establishing, maintaining or enhancing programs and services having a close nexus to the department's statutory obligation(s) and/or core mission.

*Detailed justification for priority unmet needs must be included in a department's budget requests submission.*

**TIER 3: Other Unmet Needs**

Requests that do not meet the criteria in either category above. Other Unmet Needs include requests that are not characterized by urgency but are included to establish a record of the request (whether submitted with or without justification) or to signal a current intent to submit the request in one of the two prior categories in a future budget phase. Requests in this category are not limited to requests funded by NCC.

*Documentation for these requests does not need to be included in a department's budget requests submission.*

#	Unmet Need	Approp	IFT	Revenue	NCC	Positions
<b>Tier 1: Critical Unmet Needs</b>						
1	Felony Trial Attorneys to handle the most complex cases	\$ 3,867	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,867	10.0
2	Legal Support - Paralegals	\$ 2,876	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,876	16.0
3	Legal Support - Psychiatric Social Workers	\$ 3,216	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,216	18.0
<b>Tier 2: Priority Unmet Needs</b>						
4	Information Technology Positions	\$ 864	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 864	3.0
5	Sr. Public Information Specialist	\$ 20	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20	-
6	Accounting Technician II (AB 109)	\$ 127	\$ -	\$ 127	\$ -	1.0
7	Information Technology Services & Supplies	\$ 1,961	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,961	-
8	Services from Other County Departments	\$ 2,713	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,713	-
<b>Tier 3: Other Unmet Needs</b>						
9	Miscellaneous Services & Supplies	\$ 445	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 445	-
10	Expiration of GROW Program Funding	\$ (317)	\$ (317)	\$ -	\$ -	(2.0)
<b>TOTAL UNMET NEEDS</b>		<b>\$ 15,772</b>	<b>\$ (317)</b>	<b>\$ 127</b>	<b>\$ 15,962</b>	<b>46.0</b>



Budget Challenge/Pressure	Source	Impact Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SHIFT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE LANDSCAPE</b>, including legislation and local policies will have a profound impact on Public Defender service delivery.</li> </ul>	External	<p>The new District Attorney (DA) is expected to significantly impact Public Defender operations and the local criminal legal system. The DA plans to file charges previously declined, reinstate capital litigation, and apply sentencing enhancements, increasing Public Defender workload and criminal liability for its clients. These changes will lead to a rise in felony filings, Special Circumstances cases, and reclassification of certain offenses as felonies, thus placing a higher workload burden on the department. Also, Proposition 36 rolled back portions of voter-approved Proposition 47 (2014) by making it easier to charge people facing certain drug charges with felonies. The new law will increase felony filings, incarceration rates, and demand on Public Defender resources. The Legislative Analyst’s Office estimates that the increased prison population resulting from Proposition 36 will cost the state tens to hundreds of millions of dollars annually.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>INCREASE IN HOMICIDE FILINGS</b> has increased the volume of highly complex cases requiring the most experienced attorneys to handle these cases.</li> </ul>	External	<p>Los Angeles County has seen a rise in homicide cases over the past decade, with a 72% increase in 2023 and 58% in 2022 compared to the median. These cases are among the most complex, often carrying capital punishment eligibility and requiring specialized and experienced felony trial attorneys.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>LOW LEGAL SUPPORT STAFF TO ATTORNEY RATIOS</b> creates added workload for attorneys.</li> </ul>	Internal	<p>A low legal support staff, such as paralegals and social workers, to attorney ratio reduces attorney time available for direct client engagement, ultimately impacting attorney workloads and the quality and effectiveness of legal representation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>LOSS OF STATE FUNDING</b> will require the elimination or downsizing of critical services.</li> </ul>	External	<p>State funding from the California Budget Act of 2021 (SB 129) for Public Defender offices will run out in FY 2025-26. These funds supported post-conviction relief services, helping reduce or commute prison sentences for thousands in Los Angeles County. The program has led to family reunification, community restoration, and financial savings for the County, state, and taxpayers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>POST-PANDEMIC LABOR MARKET</b> has created persistent hiring and retention challenges.</li> </ul>	External	<p>Since 2020, the competition for attorney talent has intensified, with turnover rates outpacing hiring efforts. Factors contributing to this trend include internal County competition and external market pressures, complexities of the job, and the high cost of living of Los Angeles.</p>