

2001-2002 GRAND JURY REPORT Office of the Blythe Public Defender

Background

The first full time deputy public defender was assigned to the Blythe Public Defender's Office in 1975. Before that time, deputy public defenders traveled to Blythe from Indio to conduct court activities. The first office was located at 260 North Spring Street. The office was moved in 1997 to a suite in the county office building at 230 North Broadway. The deputy public defender uses two of the seven total offices in the suite.

The Blythe office is currently staffed with one deputy public defender and one legal transcriber. In addition, an investigator is assigned to the office on the average of eight hours per week. The office receives approximately 400 to 500 cases per year including misdemeanor and felony cases.

Findings

1. The legal transcriber's office has window access to the entry lobby. The duties include but are not limited to preparing legal documents, transcribing from audio tapes or hand written drafts, creating various legal documents such as writs and motions, maintaining client files, data entry, as well as filing and reception duties.
2. An office assistant could do some of the above duties. An office assistant salary range is \$8.56 to \$13.38 per hour. A legal transcriber salary range is \$11.55 to \$18.19 per hour.
3. When the legal transcriber is out of the office and the deputy public defender is in court the office is closed. During these times no one is available to answer phones, assist clients and visitors.
4. There are five vacant offices in the suite housing the deputy public defender's office. These offices are equal in size and quality to those currently occupied by the deputy public defender and staff.

Recommendations

**Riverside County Public Defender
Riverside County Department of Facilities Management
Riverside County Board of Supervisors**

1. The Riverside County Public Defender evaluate the need for an additional full or part time legal transcriber or office assistant to augment the staff of the Blythe Public Defender's Office.
2. The Department of Facilities Management investigate possible options for the use of the vacant offices in the Blythe public defender's suite by other county services.