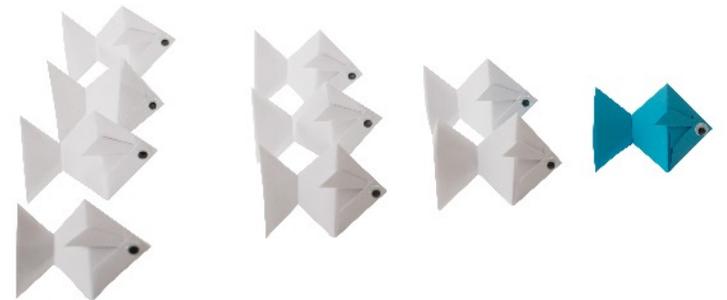


Maryland Office of the Public Defender

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2019



# THE FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2018

Approximately six years ago, for the first time in our 40 years of existence, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) embarked on the development of a strategic plan in order to reaffirm our shared values in seeking justice, fairness and dignity for all of our clients.

We began by leveraging all MOPD talent, commitment and creativity to aid in identifying and achieving our goals. Employees were asked to identify individuals whose interests and strengths would help achieve our goals for the next 5 years. Employees then had the opportunity to participate in an anonymous survey, confidential interviews, focus groups or meetings to identify our shared values, strengths, challenges, and priorities. These ideas were consolidated and are reflected in the mission statement, core values, goals and strategies documented in the finalized plan.

All of MOPD leadership and management throughout the Districts and divisions were tasked with identifying ways to achieve the goals and strategies outlined in the plan. This included brainstorming, sharing ideas, and generating support for the plan. MOPD employees participated in the focus committees that worked to narrow down strategy steps in order to achieve our goals and demonstrate measurable progress in the focus areas outlined in the plan. For MOPD to have achieved its goals, we were asked to be open to new ideas and willing to focus on a “back to basics” approach in doing what we have committed to do - provide superior representation to our clients.

We received substantial funding from Open Society Institute-Baltimore, and from the Bureau of Justice Assistance within the U.S. Department of Justice to establish the process and create the plan.



What did we accomplish? The following is an abbreviated list of the results of our strategic planning process:

## CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

- Enhanced recruitment and assessment of attorneys. Hired in classes twice yearly. New attorney hires were trained as a class which resulted in community building throughout MOPD.
- Improved internal and external communications through MOPD website, newsletters, press releases, media outreach, op-eds and social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.).
- Instituted vertical representation, juvenile standards, career juvenile hiring policy.
- Partnered with Gideon’s Promise to establish the first certified Gideon’s Promise Training program for a state public defender system in the U.S.
- Established Litigation Support Group including forensics, social work, mental health, and investigation.
- Expanded community involvement (expungement clinics, education initiatives, etc.).
- Enhanced legislative and government relations initiatives such as the Bail Reform Coalition.

## CLIENT CENTERED

- Core values integrated throughout divisions and districts.
- Social workers provided links to services in community.
- Enhanced mitigation advocacy.
- Greatly expanded use of experts.
- Encouraged team and vertical representation.
- Engaged pro bono assistance in many districts and divisions.

## POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Upgraded and improved work environments throughout MOPD. New or upgraded office space for Towson, Rockville, Silver Spring, Hagerstown, Centreville, Princess Anne, Salisbury, Oakland, Cumberland, LaPlata, Denton, PG Parental Defense, Annapolis, Hyattsville, Ellicott City, Mental Health, Post Conviction Defenders, Social Workers, Training, Wabash, Fiscal, HR, Information Technology, and others.
- Established system for adjustments to fair allocation of resources throughout agency.
- Encouraged reward and recognition for employees.
- Transitioned from a traditional personnel office to a professional HR department.

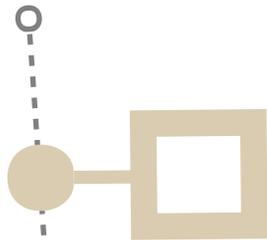
## LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

- Improved data collection to assist management.
- Established management training.
- Improved onboarding processes for all employees.
- Established Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee.
- Added Diversity and Inclusion goals to strategic plan.
- Created and hired Director of Diversity & Inclusion into senior management.
- Appointed effective managers throughout MOPD.
- Changed management when necessary and held managers accountable.

## TECHNOLOGY

- Procured new case management system (under development).
- Opened state-of-the-art tech center in Linthicum with new servers to protect MOPD data.
- Established Technology Committee.
- Established plan for attorney mobility and remote connectivity to MOPD network.

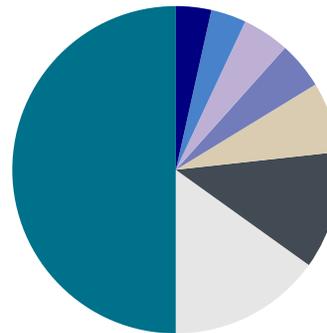
# THE NEW STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



## EMPLOYEE SURVEY 2017

515 employees responded anonymously to an online survey. Based on the responses from that survey, 7 Areas of Focus were developed (see Page 5).

What single change would most increase your job satisfaction?



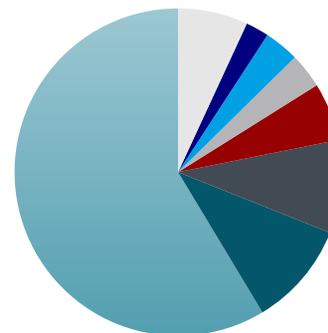
- More Manpower, Lower Caseloads
- Improved Management & Supervision
- Better Technology
- Better Office Environment & Culture
- Improved Case Prep & Procedures
- More Support from Administration
- More Training
- Others



## LEADERS RETREAT

The leaders from every district, division, and administrative division spent a day in Annapolis in May 2017 and collaboratively developed goals and strategies for each Area of Focus.

What do you see as the #1 issue or challenge facing the agency today?



- Manpower & Retention
- Lack of Resources to do Job
- Outdated Technology
- Better Management & Supervision
- Lack of Representation Standards
- Salary & Career Growth
- Administration Disconnected
- Others



## WRITING TEAMS

6 teams comprised of over 35 employees from various districts and divisions across the state worked to refine the goals and strategies developed at the Leaders Retreat. The plan was further refined by the Writing Team Leads from each team.

*\*Quotes throughout this plan came directly from employee responses to the survey.*

*"Change is happening fast and we would like to be involved."*

# AREAS OF FOCUS



CORE STAFF HIRING & ENGAGEMENT



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



ATTORNEY DEVELOPMENT



ADVOCACY FOR RESOURCES



LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

# CORE STAFF HIRING & ENGAGEMENT

Effective recruitment and selection methods are constantly evolving in the 21st century workplace. Successful recruitment and selection strategies for Core Staff are beneficial to OPD in multiple ways such as, employee engagement, sustained job performance, employee retention and low turnover. In addition, employee training and enhancement of knowledge, skills, and abilities increase efficiency, broaden value-creation capabilities, and increase morale and comradery. It is critical to keep employees skills updated to provide maximum value to the employee and OPD overall.

## Hire the Most Talented Core Staff

1. Develop systems to identify strengths that meet MOPD needs
2. Develop appropriate advertisement and recruitment tools
3. Work with Stakeholders to navigate recruitment methods to ensure the best candidates are selected
4. Increase effective and inclusive outreach methods

## Invest in the Development of Core Staff

1. Identify areas of interest or capabilities
2. Training to enhance knowledge, skills and abilities
3. Create a CLE Core Staff curriculum
4. Core Staff orientations

## Foster Clear Communications

1. Develop tools for effective two-way communication between supervisor & supervisee
2. Provide timely performance evaluations and feedback
3. Encourage proactive teambuilding

## Engage & Retain Talented Staff

1. Foster and promote respect and understanding between attorneys, core staff and clients
2. Provide clear explanations regarding classifications and roles
3. Provide opportunities for involvement
4. Conduct frequent team meetings and regular individual supervision sessions

*"We need more support staff – plain and simple."*

*The #1 issue facing our agency is "lack of support staff training" and retaining support staff.*

*The #1 issue facing our agency is "more mentor relationships in district offices, including courtroom observation and feedback."*



# A T T O R N E Y DEVELOPMENT

## Develop Training Curriculum for Supervisors, Trainers and Mentors

1. Define roles and expectations for supervisors, trainers, and mentors
2. Develop frequent trainings for supervisors, trainers, and mentors on effective training and coaching methods

MOPD is committed to not only hiring highly skilled attorneys, but also dedicated to ensuring that our attorneys' legal, communicative, and client centered skills continue to develop while employed. In order to fulfill this objective, MOPD concentrates its efforts on creating and developing: 1) curriculum for supervisors, trainers, and mentors; 2) individualized attorney training plans; 3) monthly in-house trainings; and 4) ways in which to support and encourage participation in trainings.

Attorney development is obtained by engaging in training sessions so that all attorneys are aware of changes in the law, improve their practical skills, and have a knowledge of systemic issues that face their clients.

## Develop Individualized Attorney Training Plans for Effective and Successful Career Progression

1. Create a comprehensive attorney-training curriculum for all phases of attorney development including, district court, jury trial, complex/advanced litigation and specialized areas of representation
2. Develop and implement a structured opportunity for collaborative team approach to litigation at all levels of representation
3. Develop and implement a structured opportunity for collaborative team 360 approach to attorney evaluation
4. Develop mentorship plans that for attorney support guidance and instruction

## Develop Monthly In-House Trainings

1. The Training Division continues to partner with Divisions and Districts to develop training programs for all Attorneys
2. Supervisors develop in-house training sessions that are provided by attorneys within their offices on topics relevant to their District or Division
3. The Training Division solicits training opportunities from other agencies, lawyer groups, and non-profits

## Support and Track Participation in MOPD-Sponsored Training

1. Supervisors communicate available in-house MOPD trainings and outside trainings
2. Supervisors create incentives, and inspire supervisees to attend at least 1-2 trainings per month
3. Supervisors will create ways to ensure full participation in intra-office/state wide monthly trainings and the Annual Conference
4. Supervisors develop systems that record of the number of trainings that each supervisee attends every month

*The single most beneficial improvement would be "team building seminars, trainings, and classes for skills improvement."*

# LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT



Developing strong leaders is critical to the success of MOPD's mission. These goals and strategies provide a blueprint for current and future leaders. We recognize the need for robust and ongoing leadership and management training. In order to achieve a Culture of Excellence, we will establish mechanisms for rewarding and recognizing excellence. To prepare for the future we need to develop strategies to identify future leaders through succession planning.

*The #1 issue facing our agency is "training and retaining top quality leadership."*

*We want "leadership training" and "improved support" from our supervisors.*

## **An Office Culture is Created in which Leaders are Identified, Nurtured and Allowed to Thrive**

1. Develop a leadership academy and yearly curriculum for emerging leaders identified by management
2. A plan for a diverse workforce is developed and implemented

## **All Managers & Supervisors are Well-Trained in Management, Best Practices and Cultural Competency**

1. Identify and adopt best practices for managers & supervisors
2. Identify and provide relevant leadership & management training
3. Establish a formal mentorship program for new DPDs, managers & supervisors
4. Establish a procedure for rewarding effective leaders

## **Managers and Supervisors Establish Formal and Informal Ways to Identify and Reward Excellence within Each Office**

1. Develop a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of managers and supervisors
2. Develop a mechanism for continually and consistently identifying excellence in all aspects of MOPD's work

# E F F E C T I V E COMMUNICATION



The area of effective communication is extremely important for any organization or team to function well. MOPD encourages frequent, multi-level communication and collaboration throughout our agency. This includes communications from Administration, as well as communications within and across all of our districts, divisions and offices. Providing effective communication and soliciting staff input is particularly important when making leadership and management decisions. We promote the vision that our agency is the sum of all of our employees. Effective communication implements the core value that we are United in Our Mission.

## Provide Communication Opportunities Within Each District & Division

1. Determine appropriate forums for providing information to and collaborating with all employees
2. Create schedules and agendas for frequent in-person and virtual meetings to occur throughout the year for entire staff as well as designated groups
3. Create a forum for confidential and/or anonymous ideas and concerns to reach upper management

## Provide Timely OPD News to External Stakeholders

1. Develop a communications plan for MOPD, to include a process for website updates, press releases, etc.

## Provide Communication Opportunities to Share Information Across Districts & Divisions

1. Establish communication medium to share legal issues and briefs; best practices; and other business process or job-related information
2. Promote and encourage active use of these tools across the districts/divisions
3. Promote interaction amongst different districts/divisions at training and conferences
4. Create a Communication Team to include 1 employee from every district and division to share important news to Administration's Communication Team

## Ensure Regular and Timely Administration Communications

1. Create schedules and agendas for regular DPD and Office Manager meetings
2. Create a regular communication network to communicate agency news to all employees
3. Create and maintain archive for easy access to past communications and current policies

## Develop Communications Training for All Employees

1. Develop best practices for professionalism in communication

*We want "better communication and serious conversations on how to make the office function more smoothly."*

# ADVOCACY FOR RESOURCES



Paramount to the operations of MOPD is the quality of representation we provide our clients. To this end, MOPD must devote significant effort to determining what resources are needed and available to meet the demands of the criminal justice system, our clients and their cases, as well as the infrastructure needs of MOPD. MOPD must keep pace with technology, promote human resource development, elevate our profile and compete more effectively with external stakeholders, reduce excessive caseloads, and support the enactment of initiatives that will ensure “justice for all” in Maryland, thereby optimizing the utility of resources acquired.

## **Establish a Formal, On-Going Resource Planning Process to Improve Decision Making**

1. Institute a formal, on-going inventory and data collection process for identifying resource needs with input from all MOPD state-wide
2. Perform cost/benefit and risk/reward analyses for each resource requirement
3. Establish a Resource Team for prioritizing, scheduling and publishing resource needs and efforts

## **Forge Partnerships and Intervene Early in Public Initiatives to Increase Funding Opportunities, Expand MOPD’s Sphere of Influence, and Affect Resource Parity**

1. Identify and perform cost/benefit analysis for contracting and outsourcing MOPD functions/activities
2. Create and maintain a portfolio of key influencers and their strategic initiatives by jurisdiction, agency
3. Assign MOPD leadership throughout the State to develop formal relationships with key state and national criminal justice stakeholders

*The #1 issue facing our agency is “lack of resources, budget & personnel.”*

*“It is important that we ‘fight the fight’ on resources, get some smaller wins, and make sure it is visible to the whole agency that we are indeed fighting.”*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



MOPD strives to further serve our clients and community through dynamic community engagement. MOPD defines “community engagement” as working collaboratively with community-based groups and organizations to mobilize resources, and influence systems that serve the collective vision for the benefit of the *community*. MOPD believes community engagement impacts the reduction of crime, informs the community about individuals’ legal rights, keeps the community abreast of current legal affairs, and strengthens trust between the community and public defenders. Furthermore, MOPD believes community engagement best equips our returning citizens with the resources and tools necessary to gain stability, independence, and successfully reintegrate back into the community.

## Communicating the Importance of MOPD Community Engagement to Internal and External Stakeholders

1. Communicate that we believe that community engagement allows us to achieve the goals outlined in our governing statute, principally that MOPD, along with our communities, strive to achieve greater public safety and stability for individuals and businesses
2. Designate a MOPD community outreach coordinator in each District to foster consistent and convenient communication between MOPD and local community partners
3. Use social media and other available media to advertise upcoming community events and publish awards, and client success stories
4. Use surveys and/or meetings to determine the community’s satisfaction with MOPD’s community engagement efforts

## Partner with Advocacy Groups and Legal Organizations in an Effort to Help Our Clients Reduce Their Chances of Continued Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

1. Establish frequent projects and events which will foster long term community partnerships
2. Engage community partners in the planning stages of projects to ascertain their perspectives and understand the community’s needs and issues

*The #1 issue facing our agency is “our ability to connect with the communities we serve to ensure trust in our work.”*

*“There is so much more we could do to better the lives of our clients ... we could do more for our community, perhaps change the perception of our organization.”*

## Encourage and Foster Staff Involvement in MOPD’s Community Engagement Initiatives

1. Seek staff input on initiatives the MOPD can feasibly undertake to improve community relations
2. Use surveys and/or staff meetings to determine the community engagement currently undertaken by MOPD staff

# SYSTEMIC CHANGE

MOPD public defenders and core staff are in the unique position to observe and confront injustice in the policies and systems that affect the lives of MOPD clients. To truly ensure positive and meaningful outcomes for our clients, we must identify these issues, and advocate for systemic change within all facets of the criminal justice system. Our fight is not limited to the courtroom, but includes the newsroom, the legislature, the Governor's Office, the Judiciary Rules Committee, and many other state and local entities. No one else in the state's criminal justice system knows what do, or does what we do. We are specially-suited to use our strength in numbers and wealth of experience to advocate for systemic change.

