

Office of the Public Defender
Clean Sweep: A Post-Conviction Records Remedies Project
Response to Funder's Invitation to Submit a Renewal Request/Letter of Intent

Short purpose: To redress the collateral consequences of mass incarceration and mass deportation, the "Clean Sweep" Post-Conviction Records Remedies Project will provide outreach, enrollment, legal representation, and post-conviction relief for 5,000 low-income people and immigrants in the county whose prior criminal convictions serve as enduring barriers to equity, liberty, and self-sufficiency.

By removing barriers that disproportionately affect people of color and low-income people, many of whom live with the intergenerational impacts of punitive justice policies, the program will increase workforce opportunities for people of color, provide employers with an expanded labor pool, reduce financial burdens on families, thus fostering capacity for economic and educational advancement, and improve public safety by increasing employment rates and housing retention.

People and geography served: The project serves low-income county residents whose criminal convictions are eligible for legal remedy through post-conviction relief, including newly available remedies for victims of human trafficking and new methods for sealing past criminal records that were enacted in the last year.

Tens of thousands of county residents convicted of non-violent drug-related and property crimes suffer enduring barriers to housing, employment, and education, while immigrant residents now find themselves threatened with potential deportation as the result of petty charges from decades past.

Recognizing this reality, in recent years California has passed new legislation (eg Prop 47, Prop 64, SB823) to redress the "tough on crime" era, providing remedies for people convicted of felonies, victims of trafficking, and vulnerable immigrants. Turning policy into practice, Clean Sweep offers legal relief to thousands of people and families.

Biggest Achievement in Advancing Racial Equity: The county has led the state in progressive defense: developing community partnerships to provide early representation for misdemeanors, remedy Prop 47/64 convictions, provide free deportation-defense, and become America's first county to reimburse families wrongfully charged for juvenile detention.

In any county, the Office of the Public Defender has an important capacity to spearhead the call for a justice system that delivers justice not just for the wealthy, not just for the privileged, but for the most vulnerable among us. Under strong leadership, the Public Defender has developed a statewide reputation for innovative, holistic and collaborative approaches to improve equity in justice-related policies, legal representation and direct outcomes. Maximizing the real-world impact of statewide reforms, the Office has committed tremendous attention to developing innovative programs that redress the enormous harms caused by inequitable policies and practices, forging abiding and uncommon partnerships with community-based organizations, advocacy coalitions, the Court, the District Attorney's Office, the Probation Department, and local police agencies.

The Public Defender's Office conducts an internal committee on diversity in hiring and retention; the committee itself is diverse in age, race, gender, sexual orientation, and life experience; the Office intentionally focuses on recruiting, retaining, and promoting attorneys of diverse backgrounds, including

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justice involvement. Through the Public Defender's Association, the Office provides significant leadership and support to develop progressive statewide legislation, including bail reform.

What Have You Learned Thus Far? Our experience has confirmed our belief that a community-focused and holistic approach to public defense is essential to remedying decades of inequitable practices in our communities and nation. It confirms our belief that justice partners have an essential role in challenging and transforming our own practices. From affirmatively reaching eligible local residents to designing nationally recognized programs and forging robust collaboration with the DA and the courts, our public/private partnerships are strengthening our community and relieving thousands of people from excessive punishment.

How Are You Working with Community to Address Racial and Economic Inequities? In addition to serving on public/private task forces (like the Racial Justice Task Force and the Pretrial Services work group) and implementing highly regarded programs like Clean Sweep and the Early Representation Project, the Office helps lead countless reform-focused convenings, community-based direct-service events, and community-based initiatives, such as Reentry Solutions Group, the Reentry Success Center, the arrest-diversion project CoCo LEAD Plus, and the deportation-defense program Stand Together CoCo, all of which are informed by and help redress racial and economic inequities.