



## MICHIGAN INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION

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December 21, 2023

Hello Indigent Defense Partners –

The MIDC met Tuesday, December 19, 2023 for its final business meeting of 2023. It's been a busy year!

I'm thrilled to report that Michigan's 133 local public defense systems are all essentially at full compliance with the required MIDC Standards. This means every Michigander facing criminal charges and living in poverty will receive equal access to public defense services due to standardized indigency screening. When a public defender is needed, compliance with the Standards also ensure all attorneys are assigned quickly, well-trained, in attendance for all court appearances, and given full access to experts and investigators to zealously defend their client's case. And of course, compliance means all public defense services are provided independently from the judiciary, no different than the prosecution or for those who can afford retained counsel.

These changes have life-altering impacts for members of our communities, and we couldn't have done it without you. Please [take a moment to watch our 2023 Year-End Review presented by MIDC staff](#) during our recent Commission meeting where you can learn more about the public defense work supported throughout the FY23 compliance grant year.

### **National Spotlight on Michigan Public Defense Systems**

Your work to meet the MIDC Standards also caught national attention among the public defense community. The recent US Department of Justice's Access to Justice Office report [\*Gideon at 60: A Snapshot of State Public Defense Systems and Paths to Reform\*](#) dedicates an entire section on the success of Michigan's efforts to strengthen its public defense systems. The authors describe our process as transformational and one that other states can and should adopt.

Similarly, public defense leaders from across the country chose to visit Michigan systems and learn about their successes in implementing MIDC Standards. In early November, counties in South Central, Mid and Northern Michigan regions hosted members of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' Rural Advisory Group for a three-day field visit, where they heard from defender leaders about changes to their public defense systems, discussed various

system delivery models and observed implementation of the MIDC Standards in real time. The group consisted of members from eight states (TX, ME, CO, KY, ND, WI, DC, AR) and a report summarizing the lessons learned is expected from NACDL by the end of the year.

## **Looking Forward in FY24 and FY25**

All FY24 plans are approved and nearly all contracts are fully executed. The first quarter of the year is coming to an end and we're in the final stages of preparing our grant management system ([EGrAMS](#)) for your reporting in January.

### FY24 Reporting Changes for Standard 8: Program Report and Attorney List

Each time there is implementation of a new MIDC Standard, we require some alteration to the grant reporting. This year all systems are implementing Standard 8 on attorney compensation and so we must modify the quarterly program report and the attorney list to track compliance with this new standard.

The attorney list has a number of categories for payments and assignments by category type, with an *optional* column to upload documentation to support payments made to attorneys. This is new and we appreciate your patience as we explore the most efficient way to gather and analyze this critical information.

[To help you with reporting, please check out our grants page on our website.](#) We have a recorded tutorial, updated compliance reporting instructions, and sample invoices attorneys can use for tracking time. And as always, your Regional Managers and the MIDC Research and Grants Teams are available to walk you through any issue that might arise.

### Planning for FY25

LARA Acting Director Marlon Brown approved MIDC Standards 6 and 7 on October 24, 2023. This means all *FY25 compliance plans are due no later than April 22, 2024*. You can read [our standards on our website](#) and application information will be available in February 2024 on [our grants page](#). In the meantime, feel free to [reach out to your regional manager](#) with questions.

## **We Need Your Input! Expert and Investigator Clearinghouse**

The MIDC Act allows us to offer an expert and investigator clearinghouse for any local system that requests the service. We're seeking information on the possibility of creating this option for you in FY25. Please take a moment to [complete this quick survey](#) on the potential need and uses for a clearinghouse.

## **Public Defender Retention and Recruitment**

As we inch closer towards the attorney workload and qualification standards, assisting in the retention and recruitment of attorneys and public defender staff and promoting the opportunities in systems remains a top priority for us. Our team is engaged in a handful of initiatives intended to broaden the pipeline of new defenders into the field.

### MIDC Careers Site

Our site dedicated to careers in Michigan public defense is live! These are exciting times to work in public defense, and if you have a career or internship opportunity that you would like us to share please let Deputy Director/Training Director Marla McCowan know ([McCowanM@michigan.gov](mailto:McCowanM@michigan.gov)) and we'll link them for up to 30 days. You can also find the site here: <https://michiganidc.gov/careers/>.

### Michigan Holistic Defense Fellowship

MIDC Regional Manager Nicole Walter is coordinating efforts with five public defender office pilot sites who will be hosting the 2024 inaugural class of Michigan Holistic Defense Fellows: Allegan/Van Buren, Calhoun, Genesee, Macomb and Wexford/Missaukee. Developed in partnership with Wayne State University, the Michigan Holistic Defense Fellowship offers the opportunity for a select group of law and social work students to spend a summer working at a Michigan public defense organization engaged in the practice of holistic defense. Applications open on Jan 2 and any law or social work student may apply. You can find [the application and more information posted on the careers section of our website](#) or you can contact Nicole directly at [WalterN2@michigan.gov](mailto:WalterN2@michigan.gov).

### Michigan Center for Civic Education Mock Trial Teams

For years the [Michigan Center for Civic Education](#) has coordinated high school mock trial teams across the state and there is a lot of opportunities to connect their work with our growing community of public defenders. Senior Regional Manager Melissa Wangler's recent efforts have led to a connecting the dots with a few of our defender leaders. This includes new teams in Ogemaw (where Melissa is a coach), Saginaw, and Dickinson Counties and a plan for brand new MCCE Northern Michigan regional competitions in the Traverse City and Marquette areas. If you're interested in learning more about how your system can join the growing list of teams, reach out to Melissa at [WanglerM@michigan.gov](mailto:WanglerM@michigan.gov).

## **MIDC Awarded National Grant to Create Youth Defense Trial Simulation Program**

Anticipating the expansion of the MIDC Act to eventually include youth defense services, the MIDC was recently awarded a three-year grant from the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create and operate a Michigan's first Youth Defense Trial Simulation Program. The training program will be designed to educate any defender representing young

clients in juvenile court, offering mock trial and immersive learning experiences. There will be more to come on this initiative over the next few months.

### **MIDC Staffing Changes**

I'm excited to announce a few changes to our MIDC team. Lauren Calef is our new Northern Michigan Regional Manager, coming to us from the Marquette Public Defender Office and starting in 2024 Matthew Lozen from Sanilac County will become the Mid-Michigan Regional Manager. We will miss outgoing Mid-Michigan Regional Manager Barb Klimaszewski and [her incredible work in the Mid-Michigan region](#), and we wish her well in retirement!

### **MIDC 2024 Meeting Dates**

The MIDC approved the following meeting dates and times for the upcoming year.

- February 20, 2024 11am
- April 30, 2024 9:30am
- June 25, 2024 9:30am
- August 20, 2024 9:30am
- October 15, 2024 9:30am
- December 17, 2024 9:30am

I hope to see you join us at the next meeting! We host every meeting in person at the Michigan Bankers Association Building 507 S. Grand Ave, Lansing, MI 48933 or access is provided online by requesting a Zoom link by contacting Marcela Westrate at [WestrateM1@michigan.gov](mailto:WestrateM1@michigan.gov) or text or call (517) 648-3143 and leave a message with your email address. The link will be provided in the morning before the meeting begins.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to improving our public defense systems. I'm looking forward to all the great opportunities ahead of us in 2024!

Happy Holidays,



Kristen Staley, Executive Director  
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission