



Committee for Public Counsel Services

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**Committee for Public Counsel Services
Staffing Expansion Plan: FY26–FY27**

Pursuant to Line Item 0321-1599 of Chapter 14 of the Acts of 2025

August 2025

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Pursuant to **Line Item 0321-1599 of Chapter 14 of the Acts of 2025**, *An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2025 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects*, the Committee for Public Counsel respectfully submits the following plan.

As required, this submission includes:

- An **update on hiring activity** undertaken under this line item to date, and
- A detailed **plan to hire attorneys** in a manner that ensures clients are **timely represented by counsel**, consistent with the mandates of the Sixth Amendment and the goals of equitable, constitutionally adequate public defense.

The Committee appreciates the Legislature’s support and attention to this critical need. The following sections outline the progress made, strategies for continued recruitment, and implementation plans for expanding and sustaining the indigent defense workforce across the Commonwealth.

Introduction

At the Legislature’s direction, the **Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS)** is undertaking the largest staffing expansion in the agency’s history. This plan reflects the urgent need to expand representation for indigent clients across the Commonwealth while ensuring that attorneys and support staff are adequately supervised, trained, and retained. The expansion plan is designed to be implemented in **two stages, FY26 and FY27**, and is supported by significant investment in **training infrastructure, supervisory structures, and recruitment strategies**.

For clarity, **NAT (New Attorney Training)** refers to CPCS’s intensive multi-week training program for new attorneys, paired with our **Zealous Advocacy program**, which emphasizes client-centered representation. NAT sessions will be offered multiple times per year to align with law school graduation and bar admission cycles.

FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) is a standard measure of staffing, used here to capture both full- and part-time positions.

Background

Prior to the legislative expansion mandate of 2025, CPCS had already hired 20 attorneys for its Fall 2025 class. Following the enactment of the mandate, that number has increased to **38 confirmed hires**, with the final count expected to slightly exceed **42 attorneys by mid-September**. Nearly 80 percent of these expansion hires are being assigned to offices in Middlesex and Suffolk counties, which are among the most impacted areas and where the need for counsel is most urgent. The remainder hires are being assigned to other high volume and impacted counties, including Barnstable and Worcester, to ensure broader statewide coverage in regions facing higher demand and capacity challenges.

Initial Steps Towards Compliance with Legislative Mandate

On August 5, 2025, the Governor signed legislation requiring the CPCS Public Defender Division to hire **320 attorneys over two fiscal years**. To comply with this mandate, we have taken the following concrete and immediate steps:

- **Candidate Outreach and Recruitment:**
We developed and launched an **attorney referral form** to collect names and contact information of prospective candidates through our professional and academic networks.
- **Law School Engagement:**
We reached out to approximately **50 law schools** throughout New England and beyond to inform them of the expansion initiative. We have also begun meeting directly with **clinical faculty at local law schools** to build strategic recruitment partnerships.
- **Campus and Public Interest Recruitment Events:**
We have scheduled on-campus interviews at all local law schools and will participate in the Equal Justice Works Conference and Career Fair, the largest public interest legal career fare in the country, in October to further broaden our candidate pool.
- **Streamlining the Hiring Process:**
To expedite recruitment, we are streamlining our internal hiring workflow. For example, we have moved key elements—such as written essays—earlier in the application process to accelerate interviews and offer decisions. We have formed multiple interviewing teams and staff have foregone vacations to assist in securing new staff.
- **Early Hiring Success:**
Between **August 5 and August 22, 2025**, within just **17 days**, we successfully hired **22 new attorneys**, all of whom are scheduled to begin training on **September 8, 2025**.
- **Facilities Expansion Planning:**
We have met with DCAM to secure appropriate assistance and guidance to secure appropriate space to increase the staff.
- **Technology and Operational Support:**
We are assessing the equipment and operational needs associated with onboarding staff and includes procuring necessary computer equipment and other resources to support both temporary and long-term placements.

FY26 Expansion

Attorney Hiring

In Fiscal Year 2026, CPCS will implement a phased attorney hiring strategy aligned with its **New Attorney Training (NAT)** schedule. This includes three distinct hiring waves:

September 2025 NAT & Zealous: Up to 44 public defender attorneys and 26 bar advocates, a maximum of 74 attendees. To date, **36 new PDD attorneys** have been confirmed, including 14 fall class recruits and 22 expansion hires.

- **December 2025 Accelerated NAT:** 30 attorneys through a condensed three-week program tailored to December law graduates and bar passers.
- **March 2026 NAT:** 50 attorneys and up to 20 bar advocates, focusing on both new graduates and experienced candidates.
- **June 2026 NAT:** Up to 20 New Lawyer hires.

In total, CPCS expects roughly 120 new attorneys on board in FY26 across staff counsel and private bar advocates.

Support Staff and Supervision

To support the anticipated attorney expansion in FY26 and ensure successful operational and supervisory capacity, CPCS will implement a coordinated increase in support professionals across key functional areas. This includes:

- **Supervisors** to maintain the mandated **1:5 attorney-to-supervisor ratio**, ensuring robust oversight and mentorship.
- **Investigators** at a ratio of 1 per 10 attorneys, with higher ratios in larger offices, supporting effective trial preparation and evidence development.
- **Paralegals and Administrative Assistants** at approximately 1 per 5–6 attorneys, to maintain a consistent staffing ratio and support the expanding caseload and operational needs.
- **Social Service Advocates** at a ratio of 1 per 10 attorneys, supporting legal outcomes through case management, sentencing advocacy, and mitigation.

FY27 Expansion

Attorney Hiring

FY27 builds on FY26's foundation with a **single, large-scale hiring initiative**:

- **September 2026 NAT & Zealous:** 100 new attorneys, the largest incoming class in CPCS history. This ambitious effort will require a nationwide recruitment campaign targeting law schools and public interest networks across the country. The September 2026 class will also include bar advocates, who will train alongside staff counsel to ensure alignment in practice standards and enhance continuity across CPCS's dual-delivery model.

Support Staff and Supervision

To sustain this unprecedented growth, CPCS will add proportional expansion in supervisory and operational support roles:

- **Supervisors** expanded in line with the 1:5 ratio
- **Investigators** increased as attorney headcount rises
- **Paralegals and Administrative Assistants** scaled accordingly

The **total projected expansion in FY27** is between **120 and 160 full-time equivalents (FTEs)** across all roles, including attorneys, supervisors, investigators, and administrative staff.

Training and Professional Development Infrastructure

CPCS recognizes that expansion is not solely a matter of increasing headcount. Without comprehensive training and supervision, new hires face a heightened risk of burnout or ineffective advocacy. To mitigate these risks and support long-term professional growth, CPCS has made **significant investments** in a layered and scalable training infrastructure, including:

- **NAT & Zealous Advocacy:** This is CPCS's **core onboarding and skills development program**, designed to immerse new attorneys in both the legal and practical aspects of public defense. The program has been **expanded and scaled** to accommodate incoming classes of up to **100 attorneys**, ensuring consistent, high-quality preparation for all new hires.
- **Supervisor Development:** CPCS has enhanced its supervisor training curriculum to ensure leadership staff are prepared to guide large numbers of new attorneys. Many will serve as **Zealous coaches**, reinforcing best practices and building mentoring relationships from day one.
- **Accelerated Courses:** Tailored programs will be established to be in place to meet the unique needs of candidates entering CPCS outside the traditional hiring cycle:
 - **December 2025:** A **three-week NAT session** specifically for winter law graduates.
 - **May 2026:** A **one-week intensive onboarding** program designed for **experienced lateral hires**, including attorneys transitioning from other jurisdictions.

This multi-layered training approach ensures that both new and experienced attorneys enter CPCS practice with the tools, supervision and support needed to succeed in a demanding public defense environment. By investing in training infrastructure at scale, CPCS is safeguarding the quality of representation and building a strong foundation for sustainable workforce growth.

Commentary

This expansion represents a **transformational investment** in the public defense system. It provides not only a significant number of additional attorneys but also the supervisory, investigative, and administrative infrastructure to sustain a modern and effective indigent defense practice. By structuring growth around proportional staffing ratios and investing in training, CPCS is helping to build a sustainable, system designed for **long-term stability** and long-term impact for the communities we serve.
