

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE GREENE COUNTY
PUBLIC DEFENDER FOR THE YEAR 2015**

The 2014 year was the second year of my appointment as Public Defender of Greene County. The Office continued to make improvements during 2015 while serving an ever growing client base. The total number of cases for the year 2014 increased by almost 16 percent from the 2013 caseload.

In addition to the regular state monetary grants, the Office wrote for and was awarded monies from a grant entitled Upstate Quality Improvement and Caseload Reduction Grant. This grant will provide the Office a total sum of \$279,553.00 to be equally disbursed over a period of three years. This rather large monetary award will, among other things, permit the Office to add another part-time public defender to Office thus decreasing the caseload per each attorney.

The Office of the Greene County Public Defender underwent some staffing changes in 2014. One part-time attorney left the Office for full time employment. While the loss of this young, eager attorney was unfortunate, the Office was able to replace this attorney with another attorney who has had many years of extensive litigation practice in the Family Court arena. This attorney has been a great asset to this Office.

The Office continued to receive Court Orders for payment of services for its work in representing clients alleged to be incapacitated under Article 81 of the New York State Mental Hygiene Law. The Office also received payment on at least another one of these previous Orders which was a new concept implemented in the year 2013. Thus, the Office continues to increase its revenues from sources outside of the government.

Assigned Counsel costs continue to burden this Office. It is difficult to predict or to restrict the money spent on assigned counsel cases. It is difficult to control this expense in that the number of conflicts of interest that cause the outside assignment is something that cannot be controlled as it relates to legal and ethical issues of law. We have explored the sharing of services but so far to no avail.

Many times the Courts order the Public Defender's Office to represent clients whom the Office has already deemed financially ineligible for our services. This office continues to voice objection at being Ordered to represent people whom the Office believes do not financially qualify, but unfortunately the Office has to comply with the Court Order of representation since the Court is the final decision maker concerning the eligibility of clients. This additional burden becomes especially costly to the Office when the assignment of counsel is combined with a conflict meaning that an outside attorney

will be paid to represent the person who is otherwise financially disqualified to be a client. This past year the Office was, for the first time, successful in obtaining an Order of the Court requiring that the otherwise financially disqualified client reimburse the Public Defender's Office for payment made to the attorney assigned to represent that client.

Based upon previous grant monies, the Office was able to install new computers. With these new computers in place, the Greene County Public Defender's Office was also able to install and begin using the Public Defense Case Management System. This system is a uniform database accessible by all the computers in the office and by all people who work in the Public Defender's Office. This database provides immediate access to case files without the need to locate a hard copy of the file (located in the physical office). This is valuable in that it would allow for any attorney to be able to immediately represent a current client (even if the client is not usually handled by that attorney but by another attorney in the office) with enough knowledge about the case just by accessing the computer file. The eventual goal is remote access by all of our attorneys to Public Defender cases.

The Public Defense Case Management System has streamlined work and increase efficiency. In installing this system, reports and simple form letters are generated with ease and speed, thus absorbing some of the effort that an additional secretary would expend. Conflicts in cases are more readily apparent and discovered quicker thus allowing for less court adjournments and generally speedier resolution of cases.

With all of the changes taking place and continuing, it is the hope and expectation of this Office to continue to provide quality and effective representation of its clients while looking forward to improving efficiency and controlling costs.