

## BECOMING AN APPROVED EXPERT FOR THE NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER [OPD]

If you become an Approved OPD Expert, this means that staff or pool attorneys who represent OPD clients are able to retain your services as an expert in a particular case if they seek to do so. No attorney who represents OPD clients may retain the services of an expert who is not an Approved OPD Expert. Furthermore, please understand that, even if you become an Approved OPD Expert, this does not guarantee that attorneys who represent OPD clients will in fact seek to retain your services in a particular case.

A. To become an Approved OPD Expert, the following discrete steps must be taken:

1) You must submit a letter of interest as well as a copy of your current Curriculum Vitae/Resume to a relevant OPD Attorney Manager. Even if you wish to become available as an expert to more than one of our offices, the initial vetting must begin at the local level at one office of your choice. If interested, the relevant OPD Attorney Manager to whom you submitted your current Curriculum Vitae/Resume will contact you to discuss your qualifications.

a) To become an Approved OPD Expert providing services to attorneys who represent OPD clients in criminal/juvenile delinquency cases, the relevant OPD Manager is the Deputy Public Defender of the Trial Regional Office from which you seek work. The OPD maintains a Trial Regional Office in each of New Jersey's 21 counties, and you can find the name of the Deputy Public Defender by accessing our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/defender/>

b) To become an Approved OPD Expert providing services to attorneys who represent OPD clients in the following four programmatic areas, the relevant OPD Manager is the Managing Attorney of the regional office from which you seek work:

- Office of Parental Representation (OPR): OPD clients who are accused in Family Court proceedings of abusing and/or neglecting children
- Office of Law Guardian (OLG): OPD clients who are children in Family Court child welfare matters
- Special Hearings Unit (SHU): OPD clients who are subject to Megan's Law tier classification
- Division of Mental Health Advocacy (MHA): OPD clients who are subject to mental health commitments

The OPD maintains OPR, OLG, SHU and MHA regional offices throughout the state, and you can find the name of the relevant Managing Attorney for each of these offices by accessing our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/defender/>

- 2) If he or she recommends that you should become an Approved OPD Expert, the relevant OPD Attorney Manager to whom you submitted your current Curriculum Vitae/Resume will ask you to complete the vendor compliance packet required of all individuals who do business with the State of New Jersey. The NJ Department of the Treasury mandates that all vendors acquire Vendor Contract Compliance (VCC) certification before they can be retained by a State government department or agency and receive payment for services rendered. Therefore, to be retained and paid as an Approved OPD Expert, you must complete and submit all required VCC forms to OPD-Procurement to be certified under the current 3-year Professional Services Waiver period (July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2016). Without VCC certification, OPD-Fiscal is unable to legally process any requests for remuneration for services rendered as an Expert. All of the required VCC forms may be accessed at [http://www.state.nj.us/defender/vendor\\_forms.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/defender/vendor_forms.shtml).
  - 3) Once in receipt of your completed vendor compliance packet, the Attorney Manager will send it and your credentials to the Office of the Public Defender Headquarters Management (PD Management) for final approval. You will be notified if you have been approved by PD Management as a Vendor Compliant Approved OPD Expert.
- B. Although the likelihood of using a particular Approved OPD Expert often is based on word of mouth, the OPD maintains an "Approved Expert Database" (AED) that includes the availability and details (areas of expertise, CV/resume, etc.) of all potential Experts who are VCC-certified and approved for inclusion on the AED by PD Management. Authorization to engage an Approved OPD Expert occurs if, and only if:
- 1) An attorney (either staff or pool) representing OPD clients makes a formal request to retain the services of a particular Approved OPD Expert in a particular case, and
  - 2) The request is approved by the following individuals:
    - a) The Regional Deputy Public Defender or Managing Attorney Deputy Public Defender who supervises the staff attorney making the request; and
    - b) The Assistant Public Defender who supervises that Regional Deputy Public Defender or Managing Attorney.

Thank you for your interest.