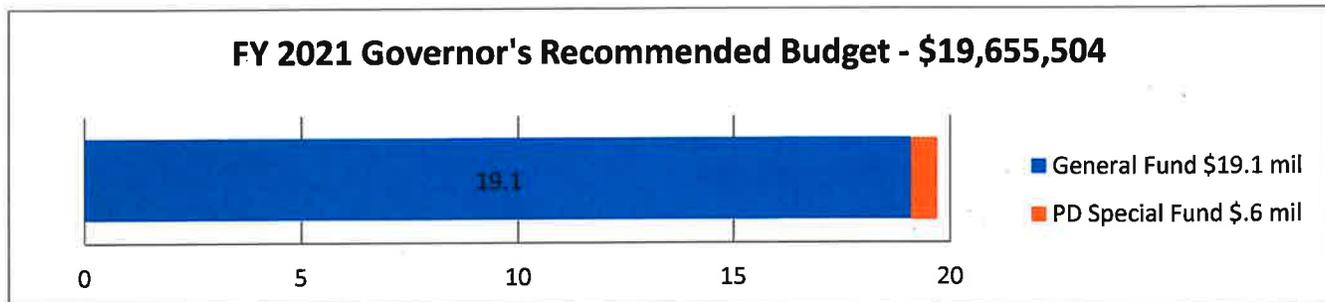


Office of the Defender General FY 2021 Governor's Recommended Budget

MISSION: The Office of the Defender General provides constitutionally required representation to indigent persons charged with serious crimes. The Office also provides counsel to children who are the subject of juvenile proceedings as alleged delinquents; to parties in juvenile proceedings including children in need of care and supervision (CHINS); to children in the custody of the Department for Children and Families; to persons in the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections; and, to needy persons in extradition, or probation or parole revocation proceedings.



WHAT IT PROVIDES:

- 3.3% increase in General Fund; Public Defense Special Fund is level funded;
- Continues current service level;
- Provides additional funds for NEK contract public defense, due to spike in caseload;
- Provides funding for staff salary and benefit increases, previously negotiated office leases, internal service funds, and ADS charges.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ODG has remained within budget for 18 consecutive years;
- Fiscal responsibility has been built on legal services provided by conflict contractors saving the state 40% when compared to a staff office;
- FY16-20 An 11% increase in the number of ACCs has kept reliance on ad hoc counsel to a minimum;
- FY16-19: Ad hoc caseload has decreased 48%;
- NOTE: Ad hoc counsel is the most expensive way the ODG provides service – it's 90% more expensive than staff.

CHALLENGES:

- FY18-19 PD criminal caseload increased (felonies 4% and misdemeanors 11%);
- FY16-19: PD juvenile caseload increased 37%;
- Attorneys are not available for hire in staff or contract systems, particularly outside of Burlington/Montpelier corridor;
- Conflict Contractors are grossly underpaid, and remain level funded;
- Private sector pay for attorneys has far outpaced public sector attorney pay in recent years.