

Department Overview 2025 Public Defender

Presented to the Board of
Supervisors on January 28, 2025



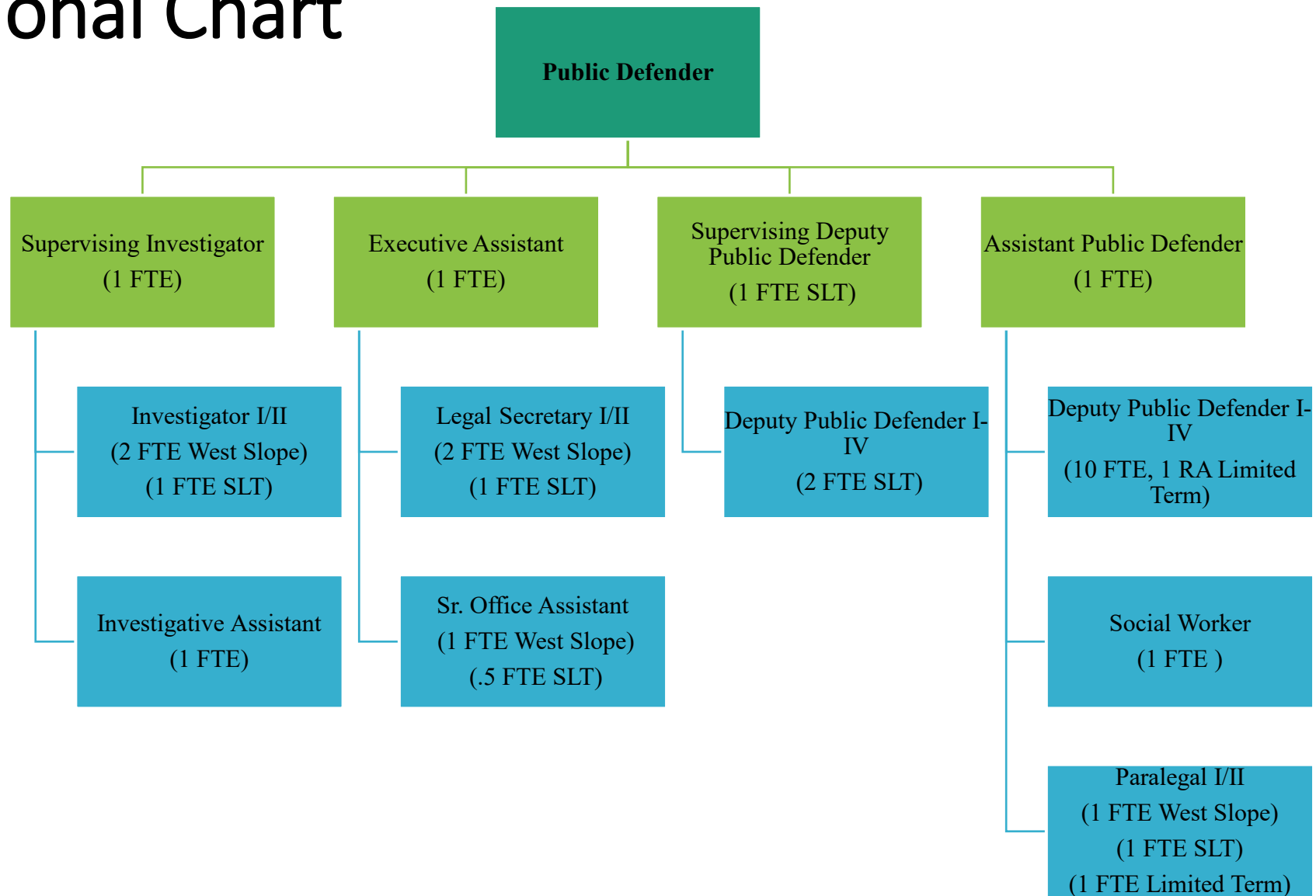
Mission Statement

The mission of the El Dorado County Public Defender's Office is to provide quality legal representation for individuals appointed to us who cannot afford private counsel.

We deliver competent, effective, and ethical legal services in a compassionate and professional manner, ensuring constitutional balance in the El Dorado County legal system.



Organizational Chart



FTE: 30.5 (26 filled, 4.5 vacancies)

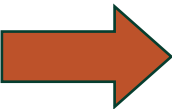
Our Services:

Our services include, but are not limited to:

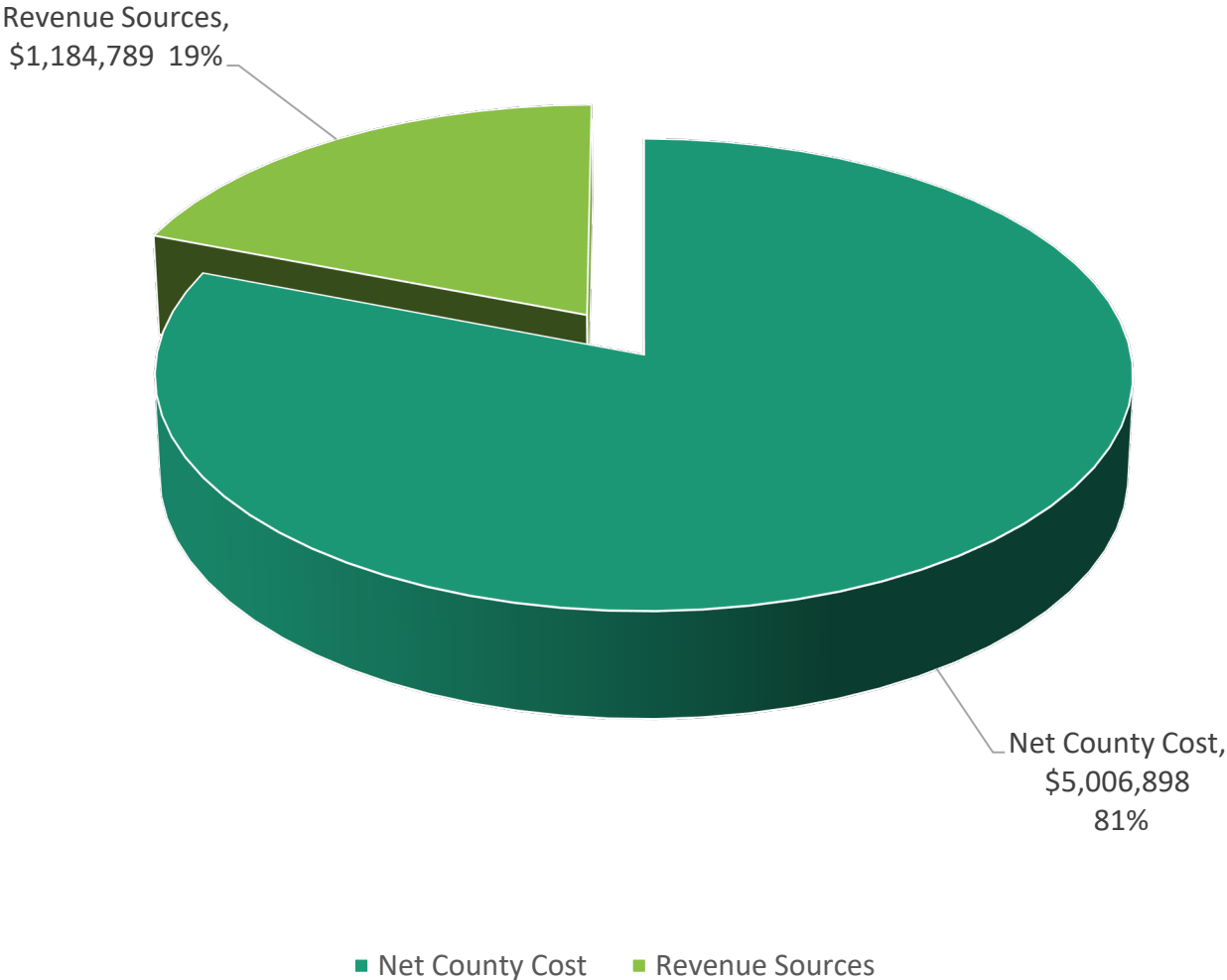
- Traditional criminal defense: Felonies and misdemeanors, ranging from homicides to traffic offenses such as DUIs.
- Holistic defense work: Behavioral Health Court, Mental Health Court, Veteran's Court, and Misdemeanor Diversion programs, and post-conviction work.
- Juvenile Representation: We now staff the equivalent of two juvenile courts due to Court restructuring their calendars—one on the West Slope and another in South Lake Tahoe (SLT), increasing this workload—requiring significant coordination and resources to meet the needs of young clients.
- Conservatorship Cases: We represent highly vulnerable clients who are in conservatorship proceedings, which often are complex and require extensive legal expertise and many hours of time. The clients are the elderly, the developmentally disabled, and the severely mentally ill.
- Family Law and Contempt Cases: These cases are related to child support contempt, family support contempt, and other legal matters where someone is accused of violating a court order. These cases are often intricate and involve ongoing legal challenges.
- Involuntary hospitalization and/or medication hearings: We represent the mentally ill who are detained at the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) and those who are petitioned to have to take involuntary psychiatric medication.
- CARE Court: As part of California's new initiative, the Public Defender's Office across the State are now playing a key role in CARE court proceedings. This is an unknown caseload as this program only went live on 12-1-24.
- Prop 36 cases: An unknown caseload, based on another unfunded mandate, but projected to be significant.

Our office is appointed by the El Dorado Superior Court and has no control over our workload, which includes a mix of criminal, juvenile, and civil cases, all of which demand specialized legal attention and significant time and resources.

**Total Operating
Appropriations
\$6,191,687**

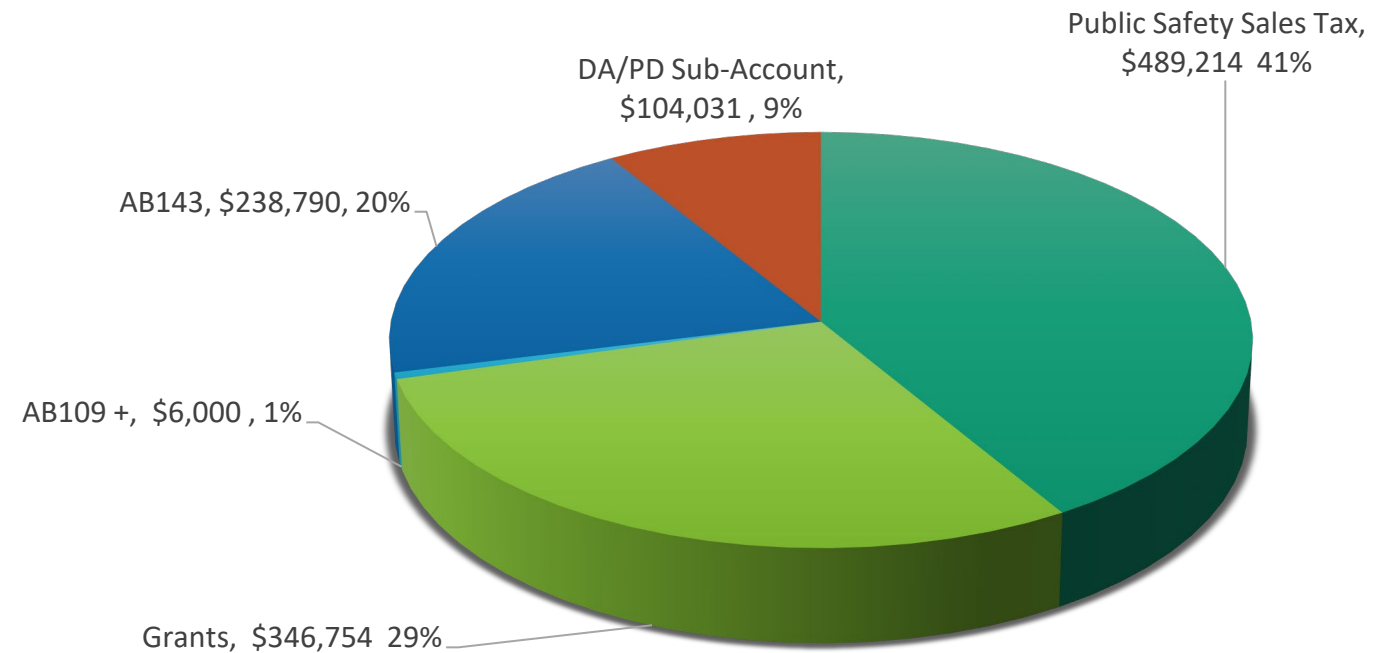


**Net County Cost
\$5,006,898**



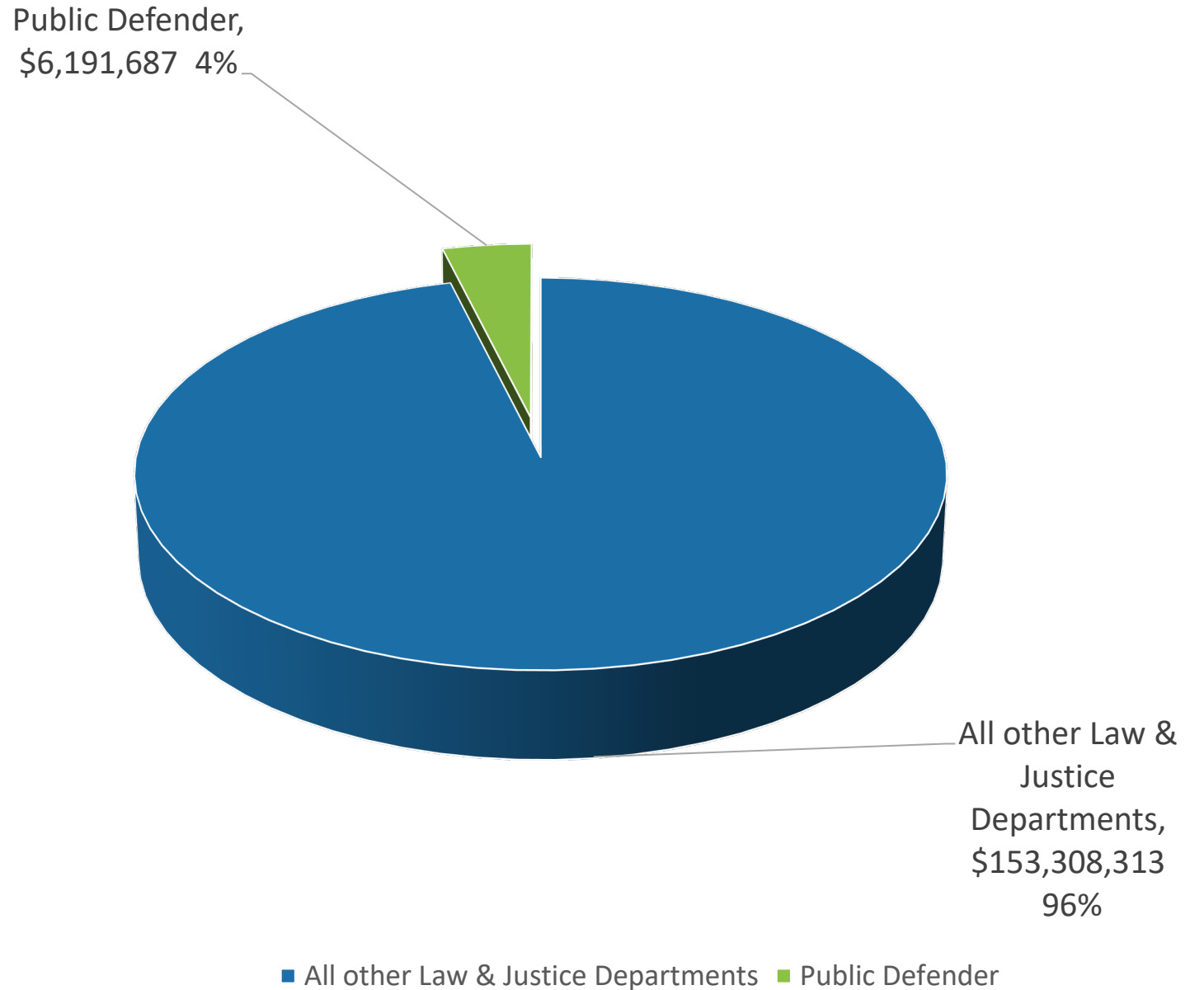
Revenue Sources

- **Public Safety Sales Tax**
 - Tax revenue
- **Grants**
 - BSCC Indigent Defense Grant, Public Defense Pilot Program Grant and Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant
- **DA/PD Sub-Account**
 - 2011 Realignment
- **AB109**
 - CCP Training and Implementation
- **AB143**
 - California Criminal Justice Realignment funds



Total Law & Justice Budget \$162,500,000

➔ **Public Defender
\$ 6,191,687**



Service and Performance Indicators

Approximately 1,300 inmates assessed by our social work team prior to arraignment to prescreen for services.*

98% increase in Request for Release petitions from Psychiatric Health Facility. **

144% increase in contempt cases.**

152% increase in juvenile cases.**

*Calendar year 2024

**Data Collected over past two fiscal years 24-2084 H 8 of 10

Role in the Strategic Plan

While our office continues to navigate staffing and resource challenges, we are committed to fulfilling our mission despite systemic hurdles, including new unfunded state mandates, increased specialty cases, and court restructuring of calendars.

We continue our legal advocacy for our clients, maintaining high standards of legal representation in an overburdened system, as well as encouraging clients to address the root causes of their criminal behaviors by engaging in services. Through these efforts, we contribute to El Dorado County's goal of Safe and Healthy Communities by ensuring justice is accessible to all, even under difficult circumstances.

Upcoming Policy and Programmatic Changes

Prop 36 and CARE Court



Recently passed Prop 36 presents increased challenges for staffing and services, as there will be impacts to our workload and there is no funding mechanism in the legislation. Newly implemented CARE Court will also require adjustments to caseloads, strategies, and resources.

Court



Continued addition of court calendars results in significant challenges for our office in ensuring adequate coverage. These ongoing changes make it increasingly difficult to effectively coordinate and provide consistent representation.

Workload Study



[Rand's nationwide public defender workload](#) study shows our office is staffed at only 18% of the recommended level. The upcoming California workload study will provide data applicable to California offices.

The Rand study highlights the need for additional resources to effectively manage our caseloads, especially in view of new, additional State mandates, some of which are unique to us.