

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/improving-public-defense-systems-good-practices-for-federal-panel-attorney-programs>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

How can courts better meet the requirements of *Gideon v. Wainwright*, the Supreme Court decision that guaranteed criminal defendants a right to representation regardless of their ability to pay? As part of its strategic planning process, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts asked Vera to identify and discuss good practices for selecting, managing, appointing, and compensating private counsel, or "panel attorneys," in federal courts. This report draws upon a review of the written panel attorney plans of all 94 federal judicial districts, interviews with panel attorney representatives, federal public and community defenders, judges, and court administrators, as well as close analysis of three districts that had made significant efforts to improve their panel systems Maryland, the Western District of Oklahoma, and Oregon to identify practices that advance the quality of defense representation, as well as those which improve monetary and other efficiencies.

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