



Date: July 14, 2021

To: Public Defense Partners

From: Ed Jones, Interim Executive Director

Re: Our Agency, Going Forward

Dear Public Defense Partners,

Getting the best possible outcomes for public defense clients is the core mission of the Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS). Our public defense providers are essential to achieving this mission. We know that the agency has work to do to improve engagement with our provider community, and we are rolling up our sleeves.

First, we know providers have had longstanding questions and concerns about payment processing timelines, policies, and most recently, delayed payments due to the agency's June budget shortfall. Second, we know the \$100 million budget holdback during the 2021 legislative session has many providers concerned about whether the agency will meet conditions necessary to get that critical funding released. Third, we know that effective stakeholder engagement is key to provider and client success, as well as achieving the agency's public service mission. Lastly, you may have seen an article in the Oregonian yesterday raising provider concerns about agency transparency and operations.

These are challenging times at OPDS, but these challenges also present us with the opportunity to begin a new chapter in agency operations. We know you need to hear from us regularly to stay up to date on how this new chapter will unfold and how you may take part in this modernization work. You can expect routine updates from the agency in the coming weeks and months about our plans to move forward with agency modernization, including how we do our work and how we share information with you. As of today, here are a few examples of what we are doing to get started:

- 1) We sent out a [provider call preference survey](#), which is still open for your input through July 17th, to determine the best way to carry out provider update calls in the future. Please take this survey if you have not already, and please use the comment box to give us more information about how we can best keep you informed and what issues are most important to you.
- 2) We made changes to our payment policies to improve efficiencies in processing accounts payable. Those changes, which are outlined in our [June 8, 2021 memo](#), become effective June 15, 2021. We will monitor processing times over the next several months to ensure that those changes are effective in reducing processing delays.
- 3) We are developing a new online form for submitting invoices that will help streamline the intake process, provide an automated date-received stamp and reply to the submitter, and automatically calculate the amounts invoiced. We aim to have this new form implemented no later than the end of September.
- 4) We are assessing the agency's website to devise how it can be a more effective tool for information and communication between the agency and providers.
- 5) We are reviewing our agency policies across the board. As we move through this assessment process, we will ask you, the provider community, for your input on how the agency should update these policies.

This is just the beginning of the road ahead, but this is also an opportunity to build the public defense system we need to get the results clients deserve. Thank you for your contributions to the essential work of public defense. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Ed Jones

Interim Executive Director