



King County

**CONFIRMATION PACKET
FOR
MATTHEW SANDERS
AS
PUBLIC DEFENDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE
KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC DEFENSE**

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Section A

- Letter from King County Executive Shannon Braddock to King County Council Chair Girmay Zahilay to announce appointment
- Confirmation Motion
- News regarding appointment
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April 30, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

This letter transmits a proposed Motion that, if enacted, would confirm the appointment of Matthew Sanders as King County Public Defender and Director of the King County Department of Public Defense (DPD), consistent with King County Code 2.60.026(B). The enclosed materials comprise the full set of confirmation documents as established by code and practice.

In October of 2024, Mr. Sanders was appointed as Acting Public Defender while a national search was conducted to fill the Public Defender vacancy. Pursuant to King County Code Section 2.60.026 (B)(4), the Public Defense Advisory Board referred a list of three candidates for potential appointment to the Executive. After an extensive interview process with all three candidates, Matthew Sanders was selected and appointed to the position of King County Public Defender. Mr. Sanders will serve in the appointment for the term beginning March 21, 2025, and ending December 31, 2026.

Prior to serving as Acting Public Defender, Mr. Sanders served as Managing Attorney of the Associated Counsel for the Accused Division at DPD where his focus was on supporting teams and promoting excellence in client representation. In addition, Mr. Sanders served in various leadership roles, including Juvenile Unit Supervisor after the merger that formed the Department of Public Defense.

Mr. Sanders is a graduate of the Seattle University School of Law and the Washington Leadership Institute and serves on the board of directors for Community for Youth, a mentorship organization for teenagers. He is also on the advisory board of the University of Washington's Gates Public Service Law Scholarship. His demonstrated experience promoting sustainable caseloads and upholding high standards of public defense make him the ideal candidate to serve as King County's Public Defender.

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

April 30, 2025

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It is my pleasure to request your confirmation of Matthew Sanders as King County Public Defender. If your staff have questions, please contact Dwight Dively, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Executive, at 206-263-9687.

Sincerely,

Shannon Braddock
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council
Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Penny Lipsou, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

Whitney Abrams, Chief People Officer, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Executive

Jay Osborne, Director, Department of Human Resources

Matthew Sanders, Public Defender Designee, Department of Public Defense

Chris Carney, Chair, King County Public Defense Advisory Board

Date Created:	3/17/2025
Drafted by:	Nate Valderas, HR Policy Advisor
Sponsors:	
Attachments:	

1 ..Title

2 A MOTION confirming the appointment of Matthew

3 Sanders as county public defender.

4 ..Body

5 BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

6 The appointment of Matthew Sanders as county public defender is hereby

7 confirmed.

March 21, 2025

Contact: [Amy Enbysk](#)
206-928-4057

Summary

Executive Dow Constantine appointed Matt Sanders as the director of the King County Department of Public Defense. He currently serves as the interim director and previously held various leadership roles at DPD, including Juvenile Unit Supervisor and, most recently, Managing Attorney of the Associated Counsel for the Accused Division.

Story

Today, Executive Dow Constantine announced that he has appointed Matt Sanders to serve as director of the King County Department of Public Defense (DPD). Sanders has been serving as the interim director since October 2024. His appointment is subject to confirmation by the King County Council.

Sanders was one of three final candidates that the Public Defense Advisory Board recommended. He emerged as the clear candidate due to his extensive experience and his demonstrated operational and cultural leadership of the department.

“Matt is the ideal candidate to lead the Department of Public Defense in its important work. I’ve had the privilege of working with him since October when he became interim DPD Director, as well as in his previous roles,” said **Executive Constantine**. “Throughout, I’ve been consistently impressed by his leadership, advocacy, and unwavering commitment to both DPD employees and the people we serve— many of whom are impacted by institutional racism, poverty, mental illness, and marginalization.”

Before serving as the interim director, Sanders held various leadership roles at DPD, including Juvenile Unit Supervisor and, most recently, Managing Attorney of the Associated Counsel for the Accused Division. He started his Public Defense career in 2011 as a Rule 9 intern and then served as a law clerk before returning in 2013 as a staff attorney after the merger that formed DPD. He earned his undergraduate degree from Kenyon College and his law degree from Seattle University School of Law, where he now serves as an adjunct professor.

"I am honored by this appointment and grateful for the trust and confidence Executive Constantine has placed in me. It is a privilege to continue leading DPD as we begin the unprecedented work of implementing new caseload standards. I am excited to partner with our talented staff, union leadership, and community stakeholders to advance evidence-based approaches to the challenges we face as a community, support sustainable

workloads for all DPD staff, and ensure that DPD continues to provide high-quality representation to the people in King County who depend on us most,” said **Sanders**.

The DPD Director is appointed to a four-year term. The King County Code requires the Executive to appoint one of three candidates recommended by the 11-member [Public Defense Advisory Board](#), a non-governing panel established by county ordinance that advocates for high-quality public defense.

Last year, DPD represented approximately 16,000 clients who were charged with crimes or faced certain civil proceedings and could not afford legal representation. These include cases such as involuntary commitment or family separation as a result of a dependency.

The department has over 450 employees, including attorneys, investigators, mitigation specialists, and paralegals.

To: King County Council Chair Zahilay

Audre Lorde, the radical feminist and civil rights activist, once posited that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Her words are often cited as both a warning and a guiding light to those who dedicate their careers and lives to combating social inequities within the law. As an attorney who has litigated everything from parole violations in King County to death penalty appeals at the U.S. Supreme Court, I’ve worked with hundreds of advocates dedicated to confronting white supremacy and supporting social justice across our nation. More than just about any attorney I’ve met, Matthew Sanders exemplifies the type of advocate who could best use the masters’ tools to dismantle a house of inequities. For that reason, it is with great eagerness and willingness that I offer my highest of recommendations for Mr. Sanders.

When I left my role as an attorney with the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, my then-supervisor Bryan Stevenson told me that the best public defenders in the nation were at King County. Although he did not reference him by name, Mr. Sanders embodies the principles that make for an ideal public defender. As a line attorney, he represented his clients with zeal, diligence, and due care. His aptitude for critical and creative thinking, as well as his skill as a writer and orator, are a boon to this county and should continue to be so moving forward.

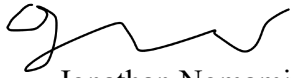
After leaving the Department of Public Defense, I became a civil rights litigator with multiple human rights organizations throughout the state, including Columbia Legal Services and currently with the ACLU of Washington. I continue to engage with the criminal legal system as an adjunct professor at Seattle University School of Law and currently serve as a member of the Council on Public Defense for the Washington state bar. Over the years, I’ve come to appreciate Mr. Sanders’ standing in the community as a committed advocate for marginalized peoples throughout King County. He has consistently impressed me with his ability to not only process complex legal theories quickly, but also convey his analysis in a multitude of mediums. Whether he was presenting to a room full of seasoned attorneys, or communicating to nonlawyers at a community event, Mr. Sanders possesses the unique ability to communicate difficult materials in an efficient and effective way.

Moreover, Mr. Sanders is resolute in his commitment to advancing racial justice and combating the white supremacy within the criminal legal system. Roughly 4% of Washingtonians are Black; however, our state’s Department of Correction’s office reports that Black people make up nearly 20% of Washingtonians in confinement. As a Black native son of Washington, Mr. Sanders is uniquely positioned to appreciate the deleterious impact racism plays in the lives of Black people in this state. To that end, Mr. Sanders is routinely involved in mentoring, and inspiring, young people of color throughout the county.

Because of his various skills, I am extremely confident that Mr. Sanders will continue make an exceptional leader for the Department of Public Defense. He is someone who has spent his entire career with the department and possesses a demonstrated ability to connect with people from a myriad of different ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds. I anticipate that his ability

to connect with individuals of a different background than him will allow him to continue bringing a needed perspective to the legal community. Mr. Sanders will be a has been a surplus to our county and I have every expectation that he will continue to bring keen legal analysis, as well as a dedication to racial equity, to his position directing the Department of Public Defense.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Nomamiukor', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jonathan Nomamiukor



Councilmember Girmay Zahilay, Chair
Metropolitan King County Council

RE: Nomination of Matt Sanders as Director of the King County Department
of Public Defense

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

I write this letter to express my strong support for the nomination of Matt Sanders to serve as the Director of the King County Department of Public Defense (DPD). I have extensive experience in the field of public defense, both locally and nationally, and I have worked closely with Matt. I believe his talent, character, and experience equip him to be an excellent leader in this challenging and important role.

I am a member of the faculty at Seattle University School of Law, where I teach the Defender Clinic, a course in which I supervise third-year law students, licensed as Rule 9 interns, in the representation of clients at various stages of the criminal legal process. I have spent more than thirty years as a lawyer and teacher in the field of public defense, with the last twenty of them here in Seattle. I was one of the inaugural appointees to the King County Public Defense Advisory Board, and I served as Chair of the Board from 2017-2019. I currently serve on the Washington State Bar Association Council on Public Defense.

I first had the opportunity to observe Matt's excellence as a lawyer when he began serving as the Juvenile Court Supervising Attorney for the ACA Division of DPD. At that time, the clinic I was teaching focused its work on Juvenile Court, so the students and I were down there quite a bit. When Matt returned to Juvenile Court as a supervisor, after a successful stint in the felony division, I was immediately impressed with how he went about his work. Always looking out for his clients, he managed to get his points across with a calmness that regularly disarmed everyone in the room. I tried to make sure that my students knew when he had something going on in court because I wanted them to observe what confident, prepared advocacy looked like.

RONALD A. PETERSON LAW CLINIC

1112 E. Columbia, Seattle, WA 98122-4340 www.law.seattleu.edu Tel.: (206) 398-4131 Fax: (206) 398-4261

Through the clinic's partnership with DPD, I had opportunities to work directly with Matt, as he identified opportunities for my students and me to assist him and his team of attorneys. Through these collaborations, I saw in even finer detail how Matt put the interests of his clients first and, perhaps equally important for purposes of this letter, how attentive he was to the needs of the attorneys and other staff in his unit. He showed the keen attention to detail that any successful trial lawyer must have, and he was creative and resourceful in thinking about how to present his cases.

I am confident that Matt is well-prepared for the many challenges confronting the Department at this time. In his time as Interim Director, he has successfully recruited a significant number of both new and experienced attorneys, an essential task as the Department responds to a number of departures in recent years and also prepares to implement the new WSBA Caseload Standards. Having spoken with him frequently before and after he took on this role, I know that he understands the necessity – and also the practical difficulty—of moving the Department to the new Standards. Given the resource constraints at the state and county levels, this transition will be difficult. That is why having someone like Matt, who has extensive experience working under the existing standards and therefore knows the toll they have taken, is so important right now. He is as well-positioned as anyone could be to have the hard internal conversations that will be required. At the same time, he will be able to deploy his well-honed advocacy skills on behalf of the Department in all of the public arenas in which that will be necessary.

Success in the role of DPD Director requires a wide-ranging skillset, a fierce commitment to the Department's clients and staff, a belief in the possibility of increasing the supply of justice, the knowledge to make that happen, and a willingness to build partnerships wherever possible and to speak hard truths whenever necessary. Matt has what it takes, and I hope the Council will confirm him to the role. I very much look forward to advising future students to pursue careers as public defenders at DPD under his leadership.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Holland". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Paul Holland, Associate Dean for Experiential Learning
Seattle University School of Law
(206) 398-4135
hollandp@seattleu.edu



April 4, 2025

Councilmember Girmay Zahilay
Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, Washington 98104

Re: Appointment of Matthew Sanders to Director of the King County Department of Public Defense

Dear Chair Zahilay:

I write today as CEO of the Washington Council for Behavioral Health in strong support of Matthew Sanders's permanent appointment to Director of the King County Department of Public Defense.

The WA Council is the professional association of licensed community behavioral health agencies, representing more than 40 agencies across the state. Our members serve primarily people on Medicaid and provide a full range of community mental health services, evaluation and treatment, residential and supportive housing, and substance use disorder services for both adults and children. These agencies also provide many of the crisis response services across the state, including mobile crisis outreach and ITA evaluations by designated crisis responders, as well as short- and long-term civil commitments, both voluntary and involuntary.

The people our member agencies treat are often also clients of King County DPD. They live with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and they are disproportionately represented in the criminal legal system. Many times, the provider interest (securing needed behavioral health treatment under the Involuntary Treatment Act) and the defense attorney interest (zealously advocating for their clients' wishes and liberties) are on opposite sides of the court room. However, once someone with a mental illness becomes involved in this system, there must be a duty from people in power to ensure that care and support is provided. The best results occur when mental health providers and attorneys collaborate and focus on tailored solutions, which can include diversion programs or alternatives to incarceration. Both behavioral health and King County DPD are experiencing a workforce shortage crisis, and I commend Mr. Sanders's ability to navigate the unintended consequences that have resulted from moving civil commitments out of Western State Hospital and into community beds around the state. He has shown true leadership in advocating for his organization and his staff, despite so many competing interests and opinions. Because of Mr. Sanders's demonstrated commitment to

serving marginalized communities, I have no doubt that he will be integral in developing a solution that protects this vulnerable population we both serve.

Lastly, I have known Mr. Sanders for over fifteen years now, and I am entirely unsurprised that he has recruited a record-breaking number of attorneys during his brief time as Interim Director. His enthusiasm for public service, his commitment to ensuring his staff—who have very challenging and stressful jobs—are supported, and his unwavering dedication to this community make him the ideal leader for King County DPD. I strongly and unequivocally support his appointment.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joan Miller", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joan Miller, JD

Chief Executive Officer

jmiller@thewashingtoncouncil.org



April 4, 2025

Dear Councilmembers,

I, the acting director of the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, support the appointment of Matthew Sanders to the position of Director of King County Public Defense. I have known Matt for close to a decade, and he is the perfect person for this position because of his experience in public defense, his commitment to equity, and his work with marginalized communities.

Matt and I met as fellows of the Washington Leadership Institute (WLI), a program to recruit, train and develop traditionally underrepresented attorneys for future leadership positions in the legal community. At WLI, Matt spoke passionately about his public defense work, and he described how hard he fought for his clients no matter their background or circumstances. In response to the 2017 travel ban and the accompanying rise in anti-Muslim sentiments, the WLI fellows worked together on a project called Five Minutes, which encouraged non-Muslims to talk to a Muslim-American for five minutes in the belief that such an exercise would dispel hate and stereotypes toward Muslim.

Years later, Matt and I are fellows in another program, the Judicial Institute, which provides training for lawyers who have an interest in pursuing a judicial position. After the program ended, Matt expressed to me that, while becoming a judge was tempting, he did not think he could walk away from public defense; the work of helping those who do not have the means to hire an attorney is too important to him.

Matt has numerous other experiences and activities that show his commitment to equity and marginalized communities, including mentoring youths. One of those experiences I have only learned about recently. We both started our legal career helping victims of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. And this just shows that Matt has had a long career, and from the very beginning, in helping those who cannot afford the high price of legal services. His career up to this point has made him the perfect person to lead the largest public defense organization in the State, and in one of the most diverse counties in the country.

I urge you to confirm Matthew Sanders as the Director of King County Public Defense.

Sincerely,

Nam Nguyen
Acting Director

Agency Overview

The CAPAA was established by the state legislature in 1974 to improve the well-being of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) by ensuring their access to participation in the fields of government, business, education, and other areas. It has a board made up of 12 gubernatorial appointees representing the diverse APA communities of Washington State.

Dr. Margaret L. Spearmon, Associate Minister
First African Methodist Episcopal Church 1522 14th Ave
Seattle, Washington 98122

Council Member Girmay Zahilay
District 2
Seattle City Council
16 Third Ave, Room 1200
Seattle, Washington, 98104104

Dear Councilman Zahilay,

My name is Dr Margaret Spearmon. I am strongly encouraging favorable action on Attorney Sanders's appointment to serve as permanent Director of the King County Department of Public Defense. My contact with Mr. Sanders has occurred through our work on the Judge Charles V. Johnson Youth and Law Forum Steering Committee for the past several years. For 33 consecutive years, the Youth and Law Forum has catalyzed critical conversations between young people and their parents-guardians with King County and local law enforcement, attorneys, judges, justice system partners, and community activists. Through this experience, I have come to know someone who demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting social justice and programs that support the health and well-being of youth and families in our community.

A survey of Mr. Sanders' resume and accomplishments in his public law practice, academic teaching, community voluntarism, and as Interim Director of the Department of Public Defense, Matt is well positioned to serve in this role, having demonstrated integrity, exemplary leadership, dedication, and faithfulness to the promotion of equity and social justice.

Please contact me if I can provide any additional information in my unwavering support for Matt Sanders' nomination for the permanent position of Director of the Office of Public Defense appointment.

Yours Sincerely,

Margaret L. Spearmon, PhD.

April 1, 2025

King County Council Chair Zahilay:

I am writing on behalf of Matthew Sanders, recently appointed Director of Department of Public Defense for King County. Matthew serves on Community for Youth's Board of Directors and has been a wonderful addition to our organization and our community. Community for Youth is a local nonprofit formed 40 years ago to create a safe and supportive community, including 1:1 mentoring for High School aged youth in the South Seattle area. Our mission is **to inspire and support students to be their best selves through mentoring, learning experiences, and a powerful community.**

Matthew is an active member of our Board of Directors and marketing committee and has expressed a genuine passion and care for youth in our community, engaging with youth at our community events, advocating and fundraising on behalf of the organization, helping to host events and recruit volunteer mentors in the community and so much more. Our program model takes a proactive approach to supporting students who self identify as low-income, BIPOC or other marginalized populations within our community. With a student population considered at-risk for low graduation rates, increased interactions with the juvenile justice system and increased barriers to post-secondary education, our approach is proven to create relationships and a network of support to help our students graduate, stay out of the courts, and pursue college and career options beyond High School. Matthew has shown that this proactive approach and work is something that resonates with him and he has put his efforts into supporting and advocating for youth in this way.

We feel fortunate to have Matthew as a partner in this endeavor and value his insight and support on the Board of Directors. I am very happy to support Matthew in this appointment of Director of Department of Public Defense for King County.

If you have any questions or concerns about my recommendation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at exec@communityforyouth.org or phone at 206.427.9963.

Thank you for supporting Community for Youth!



Sarah Popelka

Executive Director, Community for Youth



THE SUPREME COURT

STATE OF WASHINGTON

MARY I. YU
JUSTICE
TEMPLE OF JUSTICE
POST OFFICE BOX 40929
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
98504-0929

(360) 357-2034
E-MAIL: MARY.YU@COURTS.WA.GOV



April 3, 2025

Sent via email

Metropolitan King County Council
King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Members of the King County Council:

I am pleased to submit this letter on behalf of Matthew Sanders for appointment as King County's Director of the Department of Public Defense. I have known Mr. Sanders since he was a law student at Seattle University School of Law, and I feel very comfortable expressing my enthusiastic support of him for this vital position.

Mr. Sanders was a Fellow in the 2017 class of the Washington Leadership Institute, which I co-facilitated with Mr. James Williams of Perkins Coie. Over the course of this intensive, eight-month leadership training program, I had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with Mr. Sanders, and I got to know him as both a professional and an individual. He is intentional about his career choices, always driven by his deep commitment to public service. Mr. Sanders is also exceptionally gifted in his social intelligence and his ability to grasp the complexities of public policy issues; he is both principled and reasonable.

I am confident that Mr. Sanders can help restore confidence in King County's public defense services and cultivate a sense of pride in the lawyers who do this difficult and necessary work. He will be a capable leader of this important department and an effective steward of your precious resources. Mr. Sanders has my full endorsement.

Sincerely,

Mary Yu
Justice

April 2, 2025

Hon. Girmay Zahilay, Esq., Member
King County Council
Seattle, WA

Re: Department of Public Defense Nominee Matthew J. Sanders, Attorney at Law

Honorable Councilmember Zahilay, Attorney at Law,

Thank you for your tremendous service as you represent District 2, and all of King County.

On or about March 21, 2025, former King County Executive Dow Constantine announced the appointment of interim director Matt Sanders as Director of the Department of Defense “pending Council confirmation.” This was after what was described as a robust national recruitment and input from the Public Defense Advisory Board. According to Mr. Constantine, as Interim Director Matt Sanders had “already achieved” significant and measurable results in such vital areas as caseload standards and recruitment of experienced attorneys. As well, Mr. Sanders had exhibited an impressive commitment to strengthen DPD.

Because I absolutely agree with that assessment, this is to urge that you and your Honorable Colleagues confirm the appointment of this brilliant, experienced and dedicated attorney, Matt Sanders, as Director of DPD.

Mr. Sanders has served as a DPD staff attorney; juvenile unit supervisor; and ACAD Managing Attorney. As juvenile department supervisor, he managed a full caseload while supervising attorneys and a paralegal. As ACAD Managing Attorney, Matt was responsible for a public defense office of more than 120 employees. During this time he worked collaboratively with all parties to ensure compliance with SEIU and Teamsters’ labor agreements.

Complementing this labor, office management and trial experience is Matthew’s dedication to youth and general community service, and to the rule of law. He has been one of my most faithful and effective volunteers for the annual Judge Charles V. Johnson Youth and Law Forum, which event is a free interdisciplinary effort of the judiciary, youth groups, law enforcement and social workers to educate all parties and to bridge the gap between them.

There may be others who may aspire to the DPD directorship. However, as an African American; as a judge; as a father of two African American young men who navigated systems to become the successes they are; as an active member of the First AME Church

community, the Loren Miller Bar Association and the NAACP, it is my firm belief that Mr. Sanders should be unanimously confirmed as DPD Director. Such would send a strong message of integrity, inclusiveness, excellence and accessibility to the lawyers who are privileged to represent our youth and others, and to the general community.

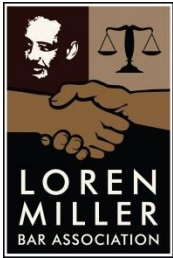
I am available to share additional comments as needed.

Thank you.

LeRoy McCullough, JD, University of Washington, 1975

McCullough06@comcast.net

Business: (206) 477-1519



**2024 - 2025 LMBA
EXECUTIVE
BOARD**

Sadie Houston
President

Darrah Hinton
President-Elect

Philip Johnson
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Jana Matthews
Treasurer

Noe Merfeld
*Immediate Past
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Humberto Quintanar
*Vice President of
Events*

Jeremy Walker
*Vice President of
Membership*

Morgan Maxey
Member at Large

William Covington
Member at Large

Kameron Powell
Member at Large

**Loren Miller
Bar Association**
P.O. Box 21964
Seattle, WA 98111
www.LMBA.net

April 11, 2025

RE: Strong Support for Confirmation of Matthew Sanders as Director of the Department of Public Defense

Dear Chair Zahilay and Members of the King County Council,

The Loren Miller Bar Association (LMBA) proudly submits this letter in strong support of Matthew Sanders' confirmation as Director of the King County Department of Public Defense (DPD). Our support stems not only from Mr. Sanders' stellar qualifications and achievements as Interim Director, but also from our lived experience with his leadership, values, and deep-rooted commitment to the communities we serve.

In conversations with our Executive Board, Mr. Sanders demonstrated an exceptional grasp of what equitable public defense requires at this moment. He spoke directly to the implementation of WSBA's revised caseload standards—offering a data-driven, phased plan that prioritizes sustainability, attorney well-being, and due process. His case-weighted credit policy reflects the kind of strategic and principled thinking our communities need in a leader.

Mr. Sanders' inclusive hiring approach also resonated deeply with LMBA. He has made deliberate efforts to move beyond elite hiring pipelines, ensuring attorneys from local schools and historically marginalized communities have a seat at the table. His first incoming class as Interim Director reflects that vision: 43% are attorneys from historically excluded backgrounds, and 30% are local law graduates.

Importantly, we know Matthew Sanders. Over the past decade, he has been an LMBA member, mentor, and volunteer. He has helped shape and support the annual Charles V. Johnson Youth & Law Forum, mentored young attorneys, and remained active in community-centered leadership roles. His board service with Community for Youth and his advisory role with the UW Gates Public Service Law Program further reflect his unwavering commitment to mentorship and public service.

Mr. Sanders has already shown the ability to lead with clarity and calm through one of the most significant transitional periods in DPD's history. His recruitment successes, operational growth, and relationship-building across labor, staff, and county stakeholders reflect more than technical skill—they demonstrate executive maturity, foresight, and trust-building. These are not qualities easily taught; they are cultivated through years of consistent community-rooted service and personal integrity.

As an adjunct professor at Seattle University School of Law and a former public defense intern himself, Mr. Sanders has invested in the full ecosystem of public defense. He brings continuity, institutional knowledge, and a deep understanding of the people who make up the department. His commitment to local retention, long-term development of attorneys of color, and the preservation of DPD's core values position him to shape a more just and equitable future for public defense in King County.

For these reasons, and because of what we know of his heart, history, and vision, LMBA strongly urges the Council to confirm Matthew Sanders as Director of the Department of Public Defense. We stand behind him not only as legal professionals, but as a community confident in his ability to lead with justice, transparency, and courage.

Sincerely,

Sadie Houston
President, Loren Miller Bar Association
president@lmba.net

Section B

- Public Defender Job Announcement
- Appointment Letter from Chief Operating Officer Dwight Dively, appointing Matthew Sanders to the position of Department Director
- Letter from Matthew Sanders to King County Council Chair Girmay Zahilay, accepting the position of Department Director, and acknowledging the duty to comply with King County Code provisions
- Résumé



King County

Director, Public Defense (Public Defender)

SALARY	\$241,873.10 Annually	LOCATION	Seattle, WA
JOB TYPE	Appointed	JOB NUMBER	2024JQ231136
DEPARTMENT	DPD - Dept of Public Defense	OPENING DATE	11/04/2024
CLOSING DATE	Continuous	FLSA	Exempt
BARGAINING UNIT	Z3 : KC Personnel Guidelines	FULL- OR PART-TIME	Full Time

Summary



King County

Department of PUBLIC DEFENSE

This position will remain open until filled but the screening process will move quickly. In order to be considered for the first round of interviews please submit your application materials at karrasconsulting.net by December 4, 2024.

The Department of Public Defense (DPD) is seeking a **Public Defender** to lead the **Department**. The Public Defender must be a **visionary and strategic leader** with a demonstrated commitment to the delivery of **high-quality legal representation to indigent clients**. Candidates should have strong administrative skills suitable to a complex organization that values employees' professional judgment and their active engagement in the development and implementation of policy. The Public Defender must be able to advocate effectively on behalf of the department within a complex political system while protecting the independence essential to quality public defense. Candidates should have an in-depth understanding of the public policy areas that connect with public defense, a demonstrated commitment to reforms in systemic change, and competency working with communities of color and other impacted communities.

About the Department

The King County Department of Public Defense was established in 2013, by voter approval of a charter amendment. Prior to

the Department's creation, four nonprofit law firms contracted with the county to provide public defense services. The Department now has four divisions, each created from the staff of one of the former firms and led by its own Managing Attorney, who is appointed by and reports to the Public Defender. The department is required under the county charter to foster and promote system improvements, efficiencies, access to justice and equity in the criminal justice system, as well as other duties assigned by ordinance. The Public Defender manages the department. Once nominated by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, the Public Defender enjoys operational independence from the political branches of County government pursuant to the charter amendment that created DPD.

DPD is widely regarded as one of the best public defense offices in the country, drawing graduates from the nation's top law schools while also prioritizing hiring local law graduates dedicated to serving their community. DPD's reputation stems from the department's holistic approach to public defense with in-house investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and legal assistants available to support attorneys on every case.

Led by the Public Defender, staff in DPD's Director's Office have a proven track record of substantial systemic change to support the Department's clients. In recent years, DPD has worked in coalition with community partners to pass legislation both locally and in the state legislature, successfully advocated for court rule amendments affecting both civil and criminal practice, and engaged in affirmative litigation to vindicate clients' rights.

The Department represents individuals accused of crimes (in both conventional and therapeutic courts), involved in the child welfare system, or subject to involuntary commitment. Cases are assigned to a division after a screening process to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The four divisions handle about 90 percent of the county's public defense cases; the remainder go to private attorneys on an assigned counsel panel overseen by the Department.

The Department employs more than 480 people, about half of whom are attorneys. Its biennial budget is approximately \$177 million. DPD is the single largest provider of public defense services in the first state in the country whose Bar Association has voted to [adopt new caseload standards](#) for public defenders following the release of the [2023 ABA/RAND study](#) on public defense workloads. Advocating for the resources needed to implement those standards over the next several years will be a core responsibility of King County's next Public Defender.

Public defenders at DPD enjoy competitive pay, top-flight benefits including a county pension, ample funding for expert witnesses, continuing education and training provided by both local and nationally recognized experts, and support from experienced supervisors.

The Department's Mission Statement

The King County Department of Public Defense represents indigent adults and children facing a loss of liberty. Our department is an independent voice that promotes justice and equity for our clients and advocates for their objectives, interests, and dignity.

DPD advocates to reduce the harm and reach of the criminal and civil legal systems that restrict our clients' liberty, and advances policy reforms to reduce systemic racism. We strive to create a flexible workplace culture that is inclusive, respectful, and supportive, premised on a shared anti-oppression framework. To learn more about DPD, visit our [website](#).

Advisory Board

The 2013 charter also established an 11-member Public Defense Advisory Board, which advises the department, reviews its proposed budget, advocates for high-quality public defense, and issues an annual report on the state of the county's public defense system.

The Advisory Board also plays a key role in the selection of the Public Defender: After a county-led recruitment process, the board selects and interviews the top candidates and then forwards to the County Executive the names of three candidates the board believes are best able to serve the county as Public Defender.

About the Position

In accordance with [King County Code \(KCC\) 2.60.026](#), the Public Defender is appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. The term of appointment for this position is aligned with the election cycle of the King County Prosecutor (four-year terms), with removal permitted only for cause.

The Executive may reappoint the Public Defender to additional terms, subject to confirmation by the Council.

The annual salary for this position is \$241,873.10.

Job Duties

- Oversee the Department's financial, information, and human resource operations, and, in partnership with the Office of Labor Relations, effectively build and guide relations with labor partners.
- Recruit, support, and lead a staff of attorneys, investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and other administrative staff that provides every client with high-quality representation.
- Ensure that the Department complies with [Washington State Standards for Indigent Defense Services](#) and the [ABA's Ten Principles for a Public Defense Delivery System \(Download PDF reader\)](#).
- Advocate within county government, supported by appropriate data, for funding sufficient to provide high-quality representation.
- Ensure the effective operation of an assigned counsel panel able to represent individuals whom the Department's staff are not able to represent.
- Serve as a voice for the concerns of public defenders, their clients, and their clients' communities.
- Work to promote system improvements, especially those that enhance access to justice and equity.

Experience, Qualifications, Knowledge, Skills

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

- The Public Defender must be an attorney admitted to practice law within the United States, in active status and in good standing.
- Applicants must have at least seven years of experience as an attorney primarily practicing criminal defense, including both felonies and misdemeanors, as well as supervisor and managerial experience.
- If not already admitted to practice in the state of Washington, the Public Defender must be admitted within two years after appointment and be an active member of the Washington State Bar Association.

THE MOST COMPETITIVE CANDIDATES WILL DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING:

- Demonstrated success in leading large and complex organizations, including the management of senior-level managers.
- Demonstrate commitment and competency in navigating complex, multi-department, agency and government relationships.
- A deep commitment to and experience in upholding and implementing principles of equity and social justice, with a proven ability to integrate these principles into all facets of an agency's operations.
- Experience working with human resources to support supervisors and staff with hiring, coaching, staff development, and performance management activities in a unionized environment.
- Experience managing programs, overseeing budgets and identifying funding opportunities, ensuring deliverables, managing projects and tasks, and communicating results.
- Ability to create a climate in which people want to do their best; can motivate many kinds of direct reports, team, or project members; enables co-workers to grow and succeed through feedback, instruction, and encouragement.

- Skill in building and maintaining collaborative relationships with internal and external partners.

Supplemental Information

WHY KING COUNTY?

At King County, our work is guided by our True North and values. Our True North is what we aspire to: Making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive. King County offers great benefits, including a pension plan, holidays, transit pass, plus training and education opportunities to promote growth and development. Our focus is to provide our employees with work life balance.

ARE YOU READY TO APPLY?

This opportunity is open to all qualified applicants. Persons interested in this position should submit the following information:

- A cover letter describing your interest in and the qualifications for the position.
- A current resume.

If you have questions regarding this announcement, please call Marissa Karras at 360-956-1336. This position will remain open until filled but the screening process will move quickly. In order to be considered for the first round of interviews please submit your application materials at karrasconsulting.net by December 4, 2024.

We will review application materials based on clarity, completeness, and alignment with the required experience, qualifications, knowledge, and skills for this position.

If you are interested in pursuing this position, please follow the application instructions carefully.

If you need this announcement in an alternate language or format, would like to request accommodation or assistance in the application or assessment process or if you have questions, please contact the recruiter listed on this job announcement.

Relocation: in accordance with [King County Code \(KCC\) 3.24.170](#), reasonable and necessary moving expenses up to a maximum of \$15,000 may be available if the successful candidate is relocating from outside of Washington.

Any employment offer will be contingent upon the results of a criminal background check and reference check.

WORK SCHEDULE AND LOCATION:

This position will be located in Seattle. The typical workweek is 40 hours per week, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This position is exempt from the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

In this role you should expect to work both in the office and in the field, while being required to report to other locations, such as court or jail facilities. DPD maintains physical offices in the following locations:

- Dexter Horton Building, 710 Second Avenue, Seattle
- Jefferson Street Building, 1401 East Jefferson, Seattle
- Meeker Street Building, 420 West Harrison Street, Kent

DPD Policies

Outside Work Policy for Attorneys will apply to employees, such that you must receive approval from your supervisor before being permitted to engage in outside employment for compensation or volunteer.

Union Membership

This is an appointed position and is not represented by a union.

Forbes recently named King County as one of Washington State's best employers.

Together, with leadership and our employees, we're changing the way government delivers service and winning national recognition as a model of excellence. Are you ready to make a difference? [Come join the team](#) dedicated to serving one of the nation's best places to live, work and play.

Guided by our **"True North"**, we are making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive. We value diversity, inclusion and belonging in our workplace and workforce. To reach this goal we are committed to workforce equity. Equitable recruiting, support, and retention is how we will obtain the highest quality workforce in our region; a workforce that shares and will help advance our guiding principles--we are one team; we solve problems; we focus on the customer; we drive for results; we are racially just; we respect all people; we lead the way; and we are responsible stewards. We encourage people of all backgrounds and identities to apply, including Native American and people of color, immigrants, refugees, women, LGBTQ+, people living with disabilities, and veterans.

King County is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Employer

No person is unlawfully excluded from employment opportunities based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation and pregnancy), age, genetic information, disability, veteran status, or other protected class. Our EEO policy applies to all employment actions, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, selection for training, promotion, transfer, demotion, layoff, termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation.

Benefits

King County offers a highly-competitive compensation and benefits package designed to meet the diverse needs of our employees and support our employees' health and well-being. Eligible positions receive the following benefits and have access to the following programs:

- Excellent medical, dental, and vision coverage options: King County provides eligible employees with options, so they can decide what's best for themselves and their eligible dependents
- Life and disability insurance: employees are provided basic coverage and given the opportunity to purchase additional insurance for both the employee and eligible dependents
- Retirement: eligible King County employees may participate in a pension plan through the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems and a 457(b) deferred-compensation plan
- Transportation program and ORCA transit pass
- 12 paid holidays each year plus two personal holidays
- Generous vacation and paid sick leave
- Paid parental, family and medical, and volunteer leaves
- Flexible Spending Account
- Wellness programs
- Onsite activity centers
- Employee Giving Program
- Employee assistance programs
- Flexible schedules and telecommuting options, depending on position
- Training and career development programs

For additional information about employee benefits, visit our [Benefits, Payroll, and Retirement Page](#).

This is a general description of the benefits offered to eligible King County employees, and every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy. If any information on this document conflicts with the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the CBA prevails.

NOTE: Benefits for Term Limited Temporary (TLT) or Short Term Temporary (STT) positions, including leave eligibility and/or participation in the pension plan through the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems, will vary based upon the terms and details of the position. Short Term Temporary positions are not eligible for an ORCA transit pass.

For inquiries about the specifics of this position, please contact the recruiter identified on this job posting.

Employer

King County

Phone

206-477-3404

Address

King Street Center
201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, Washington, 98104

Website

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/>



King County

Office of the Executive
Chinook Building
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 810
Seattle, WA 98104

March 19, 2025

Matthew Sanders

Dear Mr. Sanders,

I am writing today to formally convey your appointment to the position of Director of King County Department of Public Defense, and to acknowledge receipt of your acceptance. This appointment is subject to a vote of confirmation by the Metropolitan King County Council, as defined in King County Code 2.60.026.

The effective date of your appointment is March 21, 2025.

Your annual salary will be \$255,176. For all operational matters, this position reports to me. For all leave requests and personnel matters, you will report to Chief People Officer, Whitney Abrams. In this role, your responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Oversee the Department's financial, information, and human resource operations and culture, and, in partnership with the Office of Labor Relations, effectively build and guide relations with labor partners.
- Recruit, support, and lead a staff of attorneys, investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and other administrative staff that provides every client with high-quality representation.
- Ensure that the Department complies with Washington State Standards for Indigent Defense Services and the ABA's Ten Principles for a Public Defense Delivery System.
- Advocate within county government, supported by appropriate data, for funding sufficient to provide high-quality representation.
- Ensure the effective operation of an assigned counsel panel able to represent individuals whom the Department's staff are not able to represent.
- Serve as a voice for the concerns of public defenders, their clients, and their clients' communities.
- Work to promote system improvements, especially those that enhance access to justice and equity.

King County values our diverse and vibrant community and ensuring the representation of all people in King County is among our top priorities. We strive to provide equity and opportunity for our employees through our Equity, Racial, and Social Justice efforts and seek to be the best run government in the nation. Your position as DPD Director and the talents and skills you bring to it will aid us in meeting those goals.

This is an exempt ("appointed") position, which is defined by the King County Personnel Guidelines as any position that is not a career service position. Exempt positions are positions to which appointments may be made directly. Exempt employees serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority.

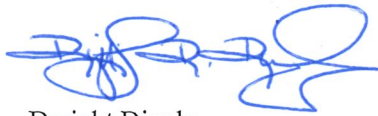
Leave previously granted to you pursuant to DHR Policy 2021-0010 will be carried over with you to your new position. Executive leave must be used in the calendar year in which it is granted and may not be carried over, cashed out, nor donated.

You remain eligible for King County's excellent benefits package that represents a considerable investment in our employees.

I am delighted you have accepted this appointment!

Below you will find additional details regarding your employment with King County. If you have any questions, please contact Jeannette Quintero at (206) 263-1051, or jquintero@kingcounty.gov

Sincerely,



Dwight Dively
Chief Operating Officer
Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

cc: Whitney Abrams, Chief People Officer, King County
Jay Osborne, Director, Department of Human Resources
Jeannette Quintero, HR Manager, Department of Public Defense
Official Personnel File

Summary of Employment

Base Job Title: 101010 - Department Director, Public Defense

Start Date: March 21, 2025

Annualized Salary Rate: \$255,176

Reporting to: Dwight Dively, Chief Operating Officer & Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget and Whitney Abrams, Chief People Officer, Executive Office

Primary work location: Dexter-Horton Building, 710 2nd Ave, Seattle, WA 98104

Normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The County values work-life balance, so we encourage you to discuss alternate work hours with your supervisor.

FLSA Status: Exempt

Union Status: Not represented by a labor union

As part of standard procedure this appointment is subject to successful completion of a background check.

This position is subject to a vote of confirmation by the Metropolitan King County Council, as defined in King County Code 2.16.110.



Department of
PUBLIC DEFENSE

Matthew James Sanders

Director Designee

710 Second Avenue, Suite 200

Seattle, WA 98104

Matthew.Sanders@kingcounty.gov

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

Chair, King County Council

Room 1200

C O U R T H O U S E

RE: Acknowledgement to Comply with County Code Provisions

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

I am pleased to accept the King County Executive's appointment to the position of Director of the Department of Public Defense. Pursuant to King County Code Section 2.16.110 (E), and all applicable provisions of the Seattle Municipal Code, please accept this letter as my acknowledgement that the Council's confirmation process may require the submittal of information relating to my background and expertise.

I look forward to receiving the Council's consideration for confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJS' with a stylized flourish underneath.

Matthew James Sanders

Director Designee

Department of Public Defense

Date/Place: April 8, 2025 ; Seattle, WA

Date: November 30, 2024

From: Matt Sanders, Interim Director, King County Department of Public Defense

Matthew.Sanders@kingcounty.gov

To: Marissa Karras
Co-Founder and Vice President
Karras Consulting

Re: Application for the Director Position, King County Department of Public Defense

Dear Ms. Karras,

Public defense has been the throughline of my career. For over a decade, I have advocated for marginalized communities, built teams of skilled attorneys, and now lead one of the nation's most inspiring public defense offices. Early in my career, as a Rule 9 intern with the nonprofit Associated Counsel for the Accused (ACA), I vividly recall representing young men of color from working-class neighborhoods not unlike the one that raised me. Many had been denied access to effective counsel on prior occasions, causing irreparable harm. These experiences solidified my commitment to public defense and inspired me to dedicate my career to zealously defending marginalized groups and strengthening underserved communities through high-quality advocacy. Today, as Interim Director of the King County Department of Public Defense (DPD), I bring these commitments into every decision I make.

When I became Interim Director, DPD faced critical challenges: implementing new caseload standards with a new yet flawed case management system, addressing strained labor relations, and navigating recruitment and retention issues during a tight budget cycle. I immediately prioritized stabilizing the department by emphasizing transparent communication, acknowledging staff concerns, and advancing data-driven solutions. Under my leadership, we secured ten additional attorney positions in the county budget, launched a national recruitment campaign to deepen our lateral candidate pool, and improved onboarding with standardized start dates and a more robust onboarding program. These efforts have helped stabilize operations and have positioned DPD for long-term success.

My unique combination of technical expertise and leadership experience positions me to effectively oversee the implementation of the new caseload standards. Having spent eight years carrying a felony caseload, I understand firsthand the toll heavy caseloads take on attorney morale and work-life balance. As a former Managing Attorney, I ensured compliance with the former credit system and developed a deep understanding of its complexities. Now, as Interim Director, I am leading the implementation of the new case-weighting system across a department of over 480 employees. These roles have equipped me to navigate the technical and practical challenges of transitioning to a fundamentally new way of assigning work.

Building a dynamic management team has been a key focus of my leadership. Recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives, I appointed Deputy Director Matt Pang, whose background as an engineer and experience working with labor unions complement our leadership team. I also restructured roles to align

with department priorities, creating an in-house recruiter position to bolster attorney hiring and posting for DPD's first Training Director. These thoughtful additions reflect my commitment to fostering talent and ensuring that our advocates are equipped to meet the demands of public defense.

Public defense is more than individual representation—it's about addressing systemic inequities and reimagining our conception of justice. I have worked tirelessly to build productive partnerships with stakeholders like the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention to address concerns and identify shared opportunities for reducing the scope of the criminal legal system. These collaborations not only align with our mission to reduce harm but also promote more humane, cost-effective, and evidence-based approaches to treat issues like mental illness and substance abuse.

DPD has grown alongside my career, and I feel deeply connected to its mission and invested in its long-term success. Working closely with former Director Anita Khandelwal during my tenure as Managing Attorney gave me a front-row seat to the challenges and opportunities of leading an organization of DPD's scale and complexity. Her leadership taught me to embrace bold, innovative approaches while remaining grounded in practical realities and never losing sight of our strategic objectives. I am committed to building on that foundation and leading with vision, thoughtfulness, and integrity.

My vision for DPD is bold and practical. By strategically expanding recruitment efforts, intentionally investing in rigorous training and development programs, advocating for systemic reforms, and implementing the new caseload standards, DPD is poised to set a new national standard for public defense. Leading DPD through this transformative period has been the privilege of a lifetime, and I would be honored to continue serving as its director.

Sincerely,

/s/ Matt Sanders

Date: 11-30-2024

Location: Seattle, Washington

MATTHEW JAMES SANDERS
Matthew.Sanders@kingcounty.gov

EXPERIENCE

King County Department of Public Defense

Oct. 2024—present

Interim Director

- Lead a department of 480+ employees, including 220+ attorneys, through a critical and transformative period.
- Collaborate with labor unions, human resources, community partners, and county leadership to address key operational and staffing challenges.
- Advocate for funding and resources through data-driven strategies, securing essential support for departmental needs.
- Develop and implement strategies to address recruitment, retention, and caseload challenges, enhancing department efficiency and service quality.

Seattle University School of Law

Seattle, WA

Adjunct Professor, Criminal Externship

June 2022—present

- Co-teach a summer criminal seminar for 3Ls with prosecution or public defense externships.

King County Department of Public Defense

Seattle, WA

Managing Attorney, ACAD

Nov. 2022—Sept. 2024

- Managed a dynamic public defense office with 120+ employees.
- Collaborated closely with the Director's Office to implement policies.
- Helped ensure compliance with the SEIU and Teamsters' labor agreements.

King County Department of Public Defense

Seattle, WA

Supervising Attorney, Juvenile Unit

July 2020—Nov. 2022

- Supervised 1-2 attorneys and a paralegal.
- Managed a full caseload.
- Ensured compliance with DPD policies.

King County Department of Public Defense

Kent, WA

Staff Attorney, Felony Unit

Oct. 2014—July 2020

- Class-A Qualified; managed a full felony caseload.
- Served as a small group leader for DPD's Trial Advocacy Program (2019).
- Presented on jury selection, cross-examination, and related topics.
- Obtained a not guilty verdict for a client wrongfully charged with murder.

King County Department of Public Defense

Kent, WA

Staff Attorney, Misdemeanor Unit

Aug. 2013—Sept. 2014

- Secured several acquittals for clients.
- Successfully prepared and argued a habeas corpus petition resulting in the client's immediate release from custody.

Second Circuit Court of Hawaii

Law Clerk for Chief Judge Joseph E. Cardoza

Wailuku, HI

Feb. 2013—Aug. 2013

- Reviewed pleadings and researched legal issues.
- Received mediation training at the Hawaii Supreme Court.
- Helped create a comprehensive foreclosure mediation program.

Garden City Group

Contract Attorney

Seattle, WA

Aug. 2012—Jan. 2013

- Discovery categorization.
- Assisted victims of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill with their class-action claims.

Associated Counsel for the Accused

Public Defender, Rule 9 Intern

Kent, WA

Dec. 2011—May 2012

- Represented clients on misdemeanor calendars.
- Conducted legal research and prepared briefs.
- Completed my first jury trial.

Academic Resource Center—Seattle University School of Law

Teaching Assistant, Contracts

Seattle, WA

Sept. 2010—May 2011

- Provided lectures and study sessions for first-year law students.
- Assisted students with understanding complex legal issues.

Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality

Graduate Research Fellow

Seattle, WA

Jan. 2010—Dec. 2011

- Assisted with the Equal Justice Newsletter.
- Conducted legal research on civil rights issues and served as a liaison with the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission.

EDUCATION

Seattle University School of Law

Juris Doctor, Cum Laude

Seattle, WA

May 2012

- CALI Excellence Award for Highest Score in Class—Contracts (2010).
- Year-End Achievement Scholarship (2011).
- Philip L. Burton Memorial Scholarship (2012).
- Summer Study Abroad in Human Rights Law—University of Cape Town (2010).

Kenyon College

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

Gambier, OH

May 2008

- Varsity Football Team (2004—2007).
- Semester Study Abroad in Comparative Politics—University of Melbourne (2007).

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Harvard Business School Online

Certificate of Specialization in Leadership and Management

June 2024

- Awarded upon successfully completing the following three courses within an 18-month period: Power and Influence for Positive Impact, Leadership Principles, and Management Essentials.

Washington Leadership Institute, University of Washington School of Law

Seattle, WA

Graduate

2017

- Selected for a one-year program designed to develop future legal leaders.
- Received in-depth training on leadership from local leaders in our legal community.

National Criminal Defense College, Trial Practice Institute

Macon, GA

Graduate

2016

- Completed intensive two-week training in criminal trial practice with distinguished faculty.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

UW School of Law Gates Public Service Law Scholarship

Seattle, WA

Advisory Board Member

May 2024—Present

- Award full-ride scholarships to first-year law students pursuing public service careers.

Community for Youth

Seattle, WA

Board Member

Dec. 2023—Present

- Serve on the board of a nonprofit providing mentorship to high school students in King County.

Washington State Office of Public Defense, Criminal Defense Training Academy

Faculty/Presenter

2020—2022

- Present annually on cross-examination at the OPD's multi-day academy.

Annual Youth and Law Forum

Tukwila, WA

Volunteer/Presenter

2016—Present

- Volunteer at an all-day program geared toward educating and empowering teenagers in King County, including judges, police officers, prosecutors, public defenders, and community partners.

PUBLICATIONS

"It's Just a Misdemeanor: a Look at Washington's Broken Probation Model," NW Lawyer, November 2016, Vol. 70, No. 8, co-authored with Brandon Rain.

Section C

- Memo from Department of Human Resources Director Jay Osborne to King County Executive Shannon Braddock regarding background check results
- 2025 Financial Disclosure Form
- Department of Public Defense Organization Chart



King County


Department of Human Resources

King Street Center
201 South Jackson Street
Suite 801
Seattle, WA 98104
206-477-3404 TTY Relay: 711
www.kingcounty.gov

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 29, 2025

TO: The Honorable Shannon Braddock, King County Executive

FROM: Jay Osborne, Director
Department of Human Resources 

RE: Matthew Sanders – Background Check

I have received the law enforcement background check conducted on Matthew James Sanders, Director Designee of the King County Department of Public Defense, by the King County Sheriff's Office.

The report contains no adverse information nor revealed any prior criminal record that disqualifies Mr. Sanders for this position.

Thank you.

King County Employees Financial Disclosure Form

Annual and new-employee financial disclosure declaration form



Filing Year 2025 (for activities that occurred Jan 01, 2024 through Dec 31, 2024)

Please read all instructions carefully, including the definitions of terms, then complete each section of the form. Terms are defined here and in the King County Code of Ethics. Use the tabs in the upper left to navigate to the Instructions and Definitions pages.

- For questions about the form, please contact the King County [Financial Disclosure team](#).
- For questions about the purpose of this form, the King County Code of Ethics, or other ethics-related topics, please contact the King County [Ethics Program team](#).
- For technical issues with the form, try refreshing your browser. If issues persist, please click [here](#).

Employee Email

matthew.sanders@kingcounty.gov

Please enter your King County email address

A. Compensation, Gifts, and Things of Value

During the reporting period, did you or a member of your immediate family receive compensation, gifts, or things of value from any person engaged in any transaction with King County in which you participated or for which you had responsibility?

☒ No ☐ Yes

B. Financial Interests

During the reporting period, did you or a member of your immediate family possess a financial interest in any person engaged in any transaction with King County in which you participated or for which you had responsibility?

☒ No ☐ Yes

C. Positions

During the reporting period, did you or any member of your immediate family hold a position with any person or entity engaged in a transaction with King County in which you participated or for which you had responsibility?

*"Person" means any individual, partnership, association, corporation, firm, institution, or other entity, whether or not operated for profit. The term does not include governmental units within the United States unless so specified.

☒ No ☐ Yes

D. Real Property

During the reporting period, did you or a member of your immediate family possess a financial interest in any real property that was either involved in or the subject of a King County action? Property for which the only King County action was valuation or revaluation for tax purposes does not have to be reported, except that employees of the Department of Assessments and Board of Appeals who are required to file this statement shall report property for which valuation or revaluation actions were taken by King County during the reporting period.

☒ No ☐ Yes

E. Declaration

By filling out the information below, I affirm that I am signing this form and declaring under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing information provided in this form is true, complete, and correct as of the date submitted.

Employee Signature

Matthew Sanders

Signature Date

2025-04-07

City

Seattle

Please enter your city of residence

State

WA

Please enter your state of residence

Director's Office

LEGEND
GREEN – SD assignment
RED – Vacancy
PURPLE – Pending Change/Start

Managing Attorneys
BEN GOLDSMITH - TDAD
KARI BOYUM - NDD

King County Public Defender
Matthew Sanders

Advisory Board

Managing Attorneys
SHANNON BLACKMAN - SCRAPD
DEE BROWN - ACAD

Deputy Director
Matthew Pang

Special Counsel for Criminal Policy & Practice
Katie Hurley

Administrative Assistant II
Christina Alburas

Special Counsel Affirmative Litigation & Policy
Vacant

Communications Manager
William Casey

Chief Financial Officer
Laura Federighi

Human Resource Manager II
Jeannette Quintero

SEE ASSOCIATED SPREADSHEET

Strategic Planning Manager I
Stev Weidlich

Case Management System Coordinator
Alison Liu

PPMIV (Operations Manager)
Melanie Oberlander

Special Counsel for Expert Services and Legal Contracting
Scott Ketterling

Administrator III
Krystyna Langsen

Public Defense Paralegal
Melissa Thomas SD
08/03/24 – 08/01/25

Civil Practice and Policy Director
Tara Urs

Administrator III
Vacant

Legal Assistant
Melissa Thomas

Assoc Spec. Counsel
Kate Benward

Paralegal
Julie van Arcken

Project/Program Manager III
Mon-Cheri Barnes

Administrative Specialist I - TLT
Vacant

PPM III
Jonathan Rudd

Public Defense Coordinators
Katrina Brown
Denise Driscoll
Kris Felsman
Kenya Hart
Graham Klym
Cynthia Leone
Darce Nyboe
Rob Stokes
Claudia Yescas

Public Defense Interpreter
Raul Cortes Ortiz

Administrator III
Terry Howard

Legal Assistant
Sam Renfro

TLT Legal Assistant
Diana De La Torre
3/17/25-3/17/26

SEP Associate II
Mariam Laine

IT Service Delivery Manager II
John Wilson

SR LAN Administrator
Loring Cox

LAN Administrators
Mark Major on SD 7/18
Will Murray filling Mark chair SD
Tim Smith

Business and Finance Officer IV
Cliff Alagar

Accountant
Crina Ghimpu
Shelby Indelicato
Wanzirai Pretlow
Meheret Woldetsadik - Payroll

Sr. Human Resource Analyst
Catalina Saldana

TLT SR Human Resource Analyst
Anastasia Ryseff
11/9/24 – 5/16/25

Human Resource Analyst
Amanda Denbo

TLT Human Resource Analyst
Falisha Forgash
7/22/24-5/30/25

TLT Human Resource Associate
Samiksha Jambhulkar
2/3/25-2/3/27
Natalia Strom
2/18/25-2/18/27

Public Defender – 3rd Year Law Positions Offered: 48