

CORE PRINCIPLES FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT (CJA) PANEL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

At its December 2003 meeting, the Committee on Defender Services unanimously endorsed the following “Core Principles for Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel Management and Administration.” The principles were developed through the Defender Services strategic planning process, building on a study of CJA panel management and administration conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice, Good Practices for Federal Panel Attorney Programs - A Preliminary Study of Plans and Practices (December 2002). The Committee was also provided with a background paper.

- (1) Establish a federal defender organization to serve every district
- (2) Provide panel attorneys with necessary resources, including local training
- (3) Districts should focus on panel organization/reorganization
 - (A) Use selection and review committee, including one or more defense attorneys
 - (B) Conduct regular review of CJA plan
 - (C) Establish qualifications for eligibility for panel membership
 - (D) Evaluate utility of specialty panels and establish standards for eligibility
 - (i) Training panel
 - (ii) Other specialty panels
 - (E) Evaluate appropriate panel size
 - (i) Set fixed number in CJA plan or
 - (ii) Devise process for determining number
 - (F) Conduct periodic post-admission review of panel members
 - (G) Use appointment process that is fair to attorneys and gives due consideration to matching attorneys with clients
 - (H) Consider use of administrator/supervisory attorney
- (4) Address timeliness of appointment of counsel to:
 - (A) Assure earliest possible appointment of attorneys and
 - (B) Avoid delay in appointing a panel attorney
- (5) Establish a procedure for reconsideration of compensation denials or reductions by the judge who made the denial or reduction.

[NOTE: *The Vera Report was distributed by the Director and the Chair, Committee on Defender Services, to Chief Judges, United States Courts of Appeals and District Courts, Federal Public/Community Defenders, members of the Defender Services Committee, and District CJA Panel Attorney Representatives via a memorandum dated February 28, 2003.]*