

PUBLIC DEFENDER APPOINTED

Ashtabula County Public Defender
4817 State Road, Suite 202
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004

Telephone: 440-998-2628
Business hours: Monday through Friday, 8am-4:30pm

WHAT THE PUBLIC DEFENDER DOES

The Office of the Public Defender operates to defend indigent persons who are accused of a criminal offense and who are at risk for going to jail. They defend cases including Felonies, Misdemeanors, Preliminary Hearings and Extraditions. They provide these legal services to all persons and base qualification decisions solely on economic status.

WHAT THE PUBLIC DEFENDER DOES NOT DO

They do not handle civil cases. If the government through the prosecutor and police department is not charging you with a crime, the Public Defender's Office won't be able to represent you. Some examples of civil cases include: Divorces, Child custody, Evictions, Employment disputes, Collections, Bankruptcies. If your legal case or questions fall into one of those categories, you may want to contact a private attorney or Legal Aid at 440-576-8120.

The Public Defender's Office also does not handle Civil Protection Orders or Temporary Protection Orders (unless they are related to a criminal case). If you need assistance with those contact Victims of Crime 440-576-3523 or Homesafe 440-992-2727 or a Civil Protection Order packet may be obtained at Clerk of Common Pleas Court 440-576-3637.

They also do not communicate with your family or loved ones for you. The communications between yourself and your attorney are confidential. They will not talk to anyone about your case. If you wish your family or loved ones to know more about your case, it is up to you to inform them.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Since you now have an attorney from the Public Defender's Office, you should direct any questions you may have regarding your case to him/her. The complaints (the charges) are very important documents in your case and are designed to explain what you are charged with. Be familiar with each charge and the penalties for each. The Judge explained this to you in court at your initial appearance. Any further questions should be directed to your attorney. **It is important for you to meet and speak with your attorney prior to any court hearings. The Court may deny you a request for continuance due to your failure to be diligent in contacting your attorney.**

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO ASSIST YOUR PUBLIC DEFENDER

First, you should have already completed an Affidavit of Indigency form. The Judge informed you they have appointed an attorney from the Public Defender's office to your case(s) subject to meeting income and asset guidelines.

Second, you need to provide your attorney with any important papers regarding your case.

Third, make an appointment to meet with your attorney to discuss the case before your next court hearing. The attorneys in the Public Defender's Office have quite a few cases and are constantly out of the office in court proceedings representing other clients. You cannot expect to just drop in and get a meeting with your attorney. If you are aware of potential witnesses who possess information regarding your case who you feel might be of help to you and your defense, be prepared to provide the names, addresses and telephone numbers of such persons. Your attorney will need to contact them in advance of any trial date to discuss with them their anticipated testimony.

Fourth, do not discuss your case with anyone other than your attorney. This would most definitely include any law enforcement officer or member of the prosecution staff. If you are confined in jail, do not discuss your case with fellow inmates as it is not unusual for the police and prosecution to employ informants who could end up testifying against you. Have no communication with the court and judge assigned to your case. This includes communications in written form and by letter. It is always best to allow any communications regarding you or your case to come through your attorney. Remember, anything you say can and may be used against you in a court of law (this does not apply to statements made to your attorney.)

Finally, Please dress appropriately and be on time. Appropriate dress demonstrates respect for the court and its proceedings. Tardiness reflects badly upon you with the court and in some instances could result in your bond being revoked. If your bond is revoked, you may well be arrested and held in the county jail until your case is finished. In the event you are ill or have other problems affecting your ability to come to court, you must contact your attorney as soon as possible to see whether your case can be postponed and continued to another date. Don't assume your attorney will be able to have your case rescheduled to a new date simply because you have called in asking for a postponement. Understand that most judges require doctors' excuses and/or some form of proof to substantiate a request for postponement of your court date. Last minute calls regarding sudden illnesses, car trouble and lack of transportation usually results in a warrant being issued for your arrest.

The attorneys of the Public Defender's Office have many resources available to them to assist them in conducting your defense. Be aware, however, the best assistance any criminal defense attorney can have is a cooperative, concerned and a responsible client.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

It is possible that the Public Defender's Office might discover a conflict of interest in regard to your case. An example of a conflict would be if the Public Defender's Office has represented a potential witness or a co-defendant in your case; this might preclude them from representing you in your case. If that is the case, then the Court may need to appoint a private attorney to serve as your attorney.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Meet with your attorney to discuss your case. Be respectful and courteous to your attorney. Pay the Public Defender application fee to the court.