



Legal Counsel for
Youth and Children

April 28, 2025

RE: Proposed Standards for Indigent Defense CrR 3.1, CrRLJ 3.1, and JuCR 9.2 (Family Defense)

We write to urge the Supreme Court to adopt amended caseload standards for family defense attorneys that are consistent with the caseload study performed by the Council on Public Defense and approved by the Washington State Bar Association's Board of Governors.

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children has represented hundreds of children and youth in dependency cases in King County since 2010. Over the past year, we have expanded our representation of dependent children and youth to Pierce, Thurston, Clark, and Skagit counties.

Over the past 15 years, LCYC has gathered and analyzed internal data from our cases. Based on that data and our teams' years of experience, we have advocated for the caseload maximum to be 35 child/youth clients at a time. Having a 35-client maximum at LCYC, coupled with supportive supervision, has allowed LCYC to largely avoid the burnout and turnover that is common in indigent defense.

As participants on the Children's Representation Standards Workgroup in 2021-22, LCYC (along with other experienced youth attorneys, and youth with lived experience), dissented from the 45 client/60 cases recommendation with a provision that the caseload standard should be reconsidered as House Bill 1219 rolled out statewide and more data was available from attorneys doing this work about what it actually takes to do this work, and to recruit and retain a diverse pool of attorneys. At that time, the only available data regarding the time required to represent a child in a family defense case came from LCYC. And, to repeat, that data showed that 35 clients should be the limit.

Thanks to the work of the Council on Public Defense's subcommittee, which convened two panels of practitioners doing this work with parents and children, the data and the math has been done and the recommendation of 35 clients or 40 cases is well-founded.

Representing kids can be a great joy. It can also be really hard work. When done with the proper support and supervision, attorneys for kids reduce some of the bias that infects the entire child welfare system, by representing the stated positions of their clients before the Court. Thus, we must recognize the need for and compensate training and supervision. Otherwise, solo contractors and small firms will be set up to fail, which in turn, would unacceptably harm clients. These clients – parents and children in the dependency system – are among the state's most vulnerable citizens facing the most extreme intrusion into the constitutional rights of their family.

Thus, we ask the Court to adopt these standards. Thank you.

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ryo' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rhea Yo, WSBA#53911
Executive Director
Legal Counsel for Youth and Children

From: [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)
To: [Farino, Amber](#)
Subject: FW: Comments to Proposed CrR 3.1/CrRLJ 3.1/JuCR 9.2 - Standards for Indigent Defense (family defense cases)
Date: Monday, April 28, 2025 2:50:24 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[25.4.28 LCYC Comments to Supreme Court Re family defense caseload standards.pdf](#)
[image004.png](#)

From: Colleen <colleen@lcywa.org>
Sent: Monday, April 28, 2025 2:46 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Cc: Rhea <rhea@lcywa.org>; Roxana Gomez <roxana@lcywa.org>
Subject: Comments to Proposed CrR 3.1/CrRLJ 3.1/JuCR 9.2 - Standards for Indigent Defense (family defense cases)

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Please see attached comments from Legal Counsel for Youth and Children regarding CrR 3.1/CrRLJ 3.1/JuCR 9.2 - [Standards for Indigent Defense \(family defense cases\)](#).
Thank you.

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(She / Her / Hers)
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LCYC protects the interests and safety of youth in Washington by advancing their legal rights.

We accomplish our mission through direct legal representation, strong community partnerships, and systemic advocacy.

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