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## ASSIGNED COUNSEL DIVISION NEWS

By: Deb Smith, Assigned Counsel Division Director

### *Private Bar Advisory Committee*

The Private Bar Advisory Committee that was established last year has helped us to better serve our private bar partners. A number of things initiated by the committee are included in this update.

The Private Bar Advisory committee raised a concern about representation in Office of Lawyer Regulation grievances. As a criminal defense practitioner, having to deal with occasional grievances to the Office of Lawyer Regulation is not unusual. While the SPD cannot provide representation to private bar attorneys we can help them by providing training. A CLE program sponsored by the State Public Defender's Office on July 9, 2004, will provide attorneys with the fundamentals of the lawyer regulation system and with information about how to represent themselves or others in an OLR grievance. Presenters include Keith Sellen, Nathan Fishbach, and Martin Kohler. The seminar will be held at the Hyatt Hotel in Milwaukee. Video replays may be scheduled in different locations later this year. For more information and to register on-line, please visit the training link at the SPD's website: <http://www.wisspd.org>.

The Committee asked if the SPD could do something to improve the process for obtaining experts. We have now made an expert database available on the website. The database is searchable by county and by type of expert. We have also posted expert rate guidelines and FAQs about retaining and managing experts.

Some Committee members suggested that the SPD start a listserv to allow private bar attorneys and staff to support each other's work and share information. It can be particularly useful to discuss the idiosyncrasies of local practice, get recommendations on experts, and compare notes on motion practice. The SPD has established a listserv. We currently have over 200 staff and private bar attorneys signed up.

### *Paper Bills, On-line Bills and Audits*

The Assigned Counsel Division strongly encourages all private bar attorneys to sign up for on-line billing. On-line billing allows us to process bills more quickly. On-line bills are usually processed for payment in 10 business days or less. Each bill submitted, whether paper or electronic, is audited for correctness and reasonableness as it comes in. ACD also does cumulative audits of all bills submitted by an attorney in a year. Ordinarily the SPD will not pay for more than 15 billable hours in a single day. On-line billing allows the ACD to do its cumulative audits without putting payments on hold. **Paper billers will be audited later this year.** Payments may be placed on hold while staff does the data entry from paper bills. You can avoid this delay if you sign up for on-line billing today.