

# Update on Kansas Public Defense

Heather Cessna, Executive Director  
Kansas State Board of Indigents' Defense Services  
January 2024

# Workloads, Pay, And Shortages of Counsel

- Public Defender Trial Level Offices

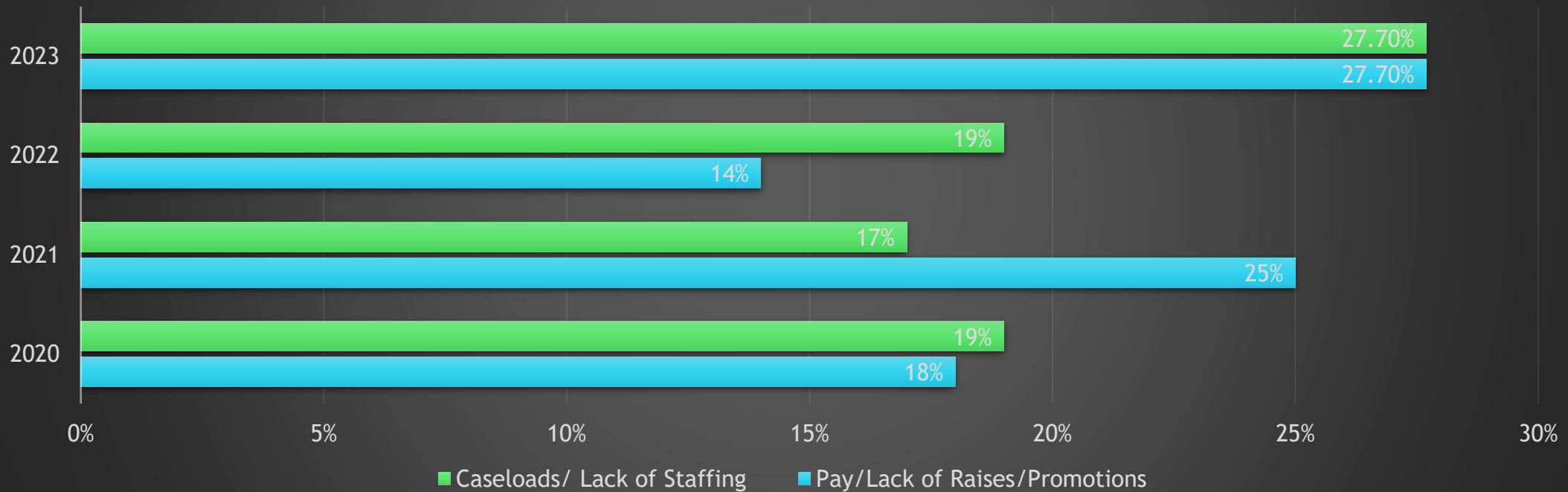
- 13 Judicial Districts
- 24 Counties
- Cover jurisdictions that produce 65% of Kansas' criminal felony caseload

- Assigned Counsel Private Panel Program Only

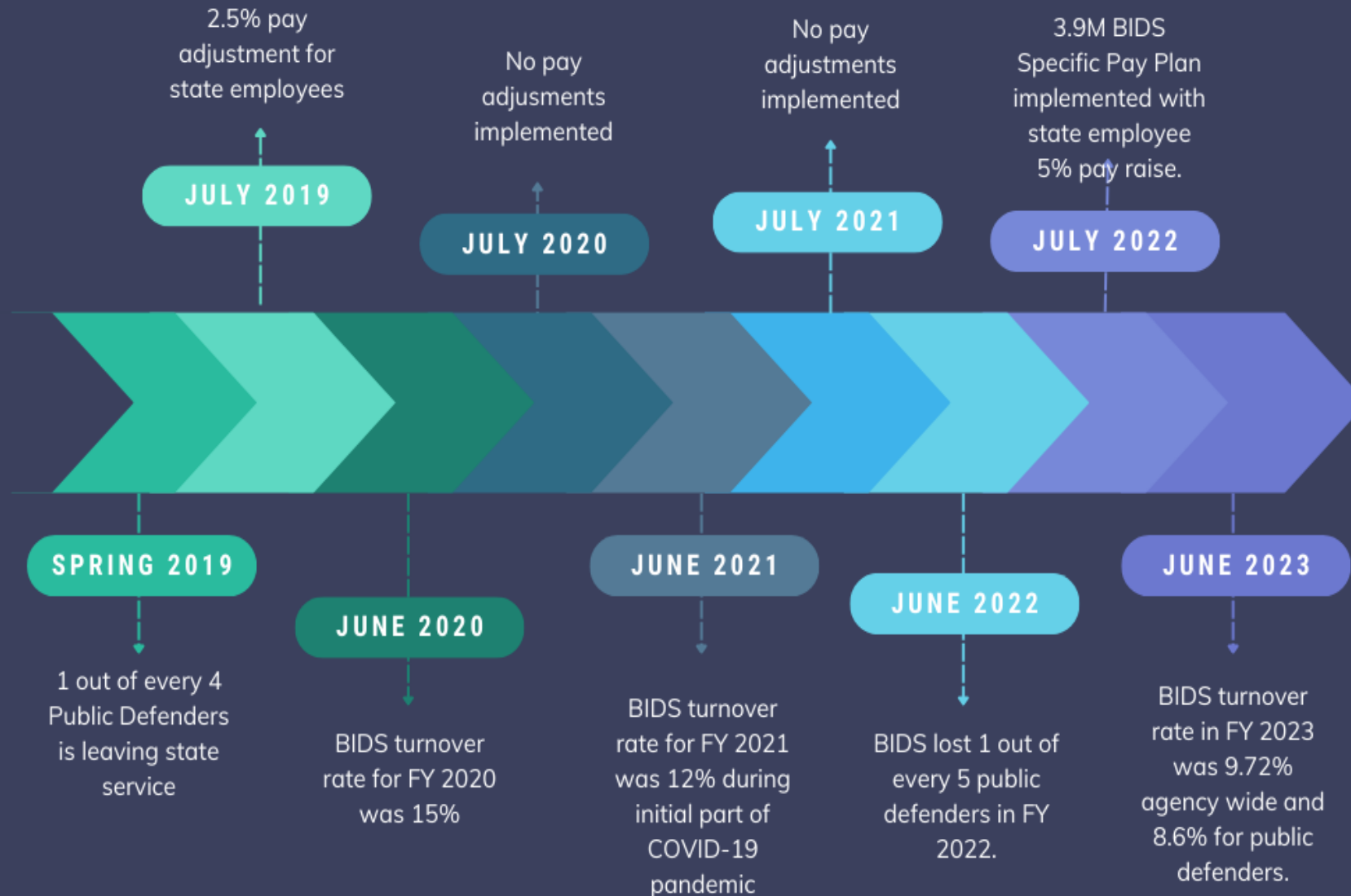
- 18 Judicial Districts
- 81 Remaining Counties
- Cover jurisdictions that produce 35% of the Kansas' criminal felony caseload

# Why Do Public Defenders Leave State Service?

"What is the biggest detractor from your well-being at work?"



## TIMELINE OF PAY ADJUSTMENT AND IMPACT ON TURNOVER



# Nat'l Public Defense Workload Standards Applied to Kansas

Case Type	Case Weight (Hours per Case)
Felony- High- LWOP	286
Felony - High - Murder	248
Felony - High - Sex	167
Felony-High-Other	99
Felony - Mid	57
Felony - Low	35
DUI - High	33
DUI - Low	19
Misdemeanor - High	22.3
Misdemeanor - Low	13.8
Probation or Parole Violations	13.5

Non-Attorney Staff Category	NAPD Recommended Ratio Per Attorney
Investigators	1 for every 3 attorneys
Legal Assistants	1 for every 4 attorneys
Mental Health Professional/ Social Worker	1 for every 3 attorneys
Office Administrative Staff	1 for every 4 attorneys

# Indigent Defense Service Staffing Shortages

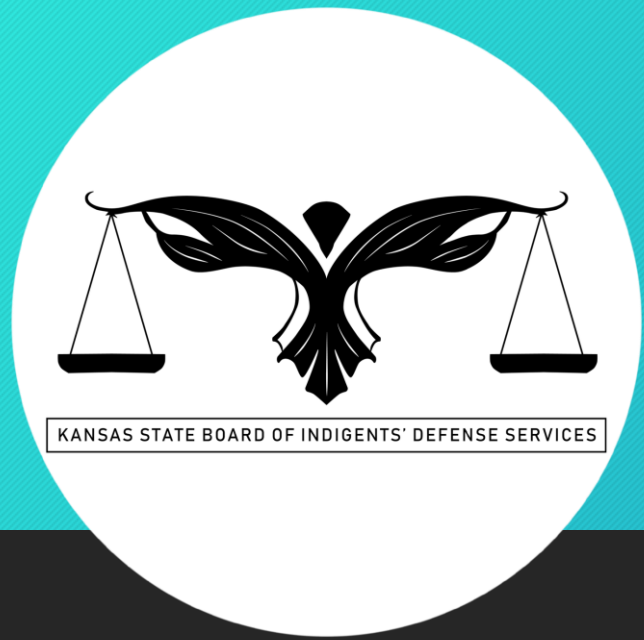
Public Defender Covered Jurisdictions:	400 Full-Time Employee Attorneys Needed
Non-Public Defender Covered Jurisdictions:	216 Equivalent of Full-Time Attorneys Needed

This means that for the areas where public defender offices already exist or will exist within the next year, BIDS needs over three times the number of full-time employee public defenders to adequately staff current caseloads at the base standard of reasonably effective counsel.

BIDS currently has 123 Full-time trial-level Public Defenders on staff.

# What Can Legislators Do to Help?

- Support for our small 25 FTE staffing request in our budget this year.
- Support for continued salary enhancements for public defense employees.
  - Pay Parity with Prosecutors
  - Regular salary adjustments + Merit Pay
- Support for ongoing funding to pay our private assigned counsel.
- Ongoing support for our infrastructure needs.
- Willingness to be a part of the larger conversation about staffing needs and criminal reforms.



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