

TRIBAL DEFENDER OFFICE, CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

The Tribal Defenders (TDO) provide public defender services to indigent members of any federally recognized tribe accused of crime within the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation. Seeing a need to address the issues bringing clients into the criminal justice system, in 2011 TDO implemented a Holistic Defense model for public defender services. Accordingly, TDO supplements traditional public defender representation with services that target mental illness, addiction, and collateral consequences to criminal charges.

Four pillars of Holistic Defense

Developed by the Bronx Defenders in New York, Holistic Defense is an adaptable model for public defender services based upon four pillars: 1. Seamless access to services whether in-house or in collaboration with other service providers in the community. 2. Dynamic, interdisciplinary communication among staff. 3. Advocates with an interdisciplinary skill set so each member of the holistic defense team understands the roles of each discipline. 4. A robust understanding of, and connection to the community served.

Services at TDO

TDO continues to study the needs of the Flathead Reservation community and the best method to client-centered services so those involved in the justice system may be more successful. As a result, TDO offers:

Driver's License Restoration - Since 2011 more than 200 TDO clients have restored their suspended driver's licenses.

Cultural Mentoring - By collaborating with the culture committees, TDO recruited volunteers in the community to provide cultural mentoring. Mentoring includes one on one counseling as well as mediating between TDO clients and those that have been wronged.

Mediation – In addition to cultural mentoring, civil litigants may mediate their cases through a collaboration with the Alexander Blewett, III School of Law, Mediation Clinic.

Pro Se Clinic – Litigants receive help drafting pleadings to file in tribal court.

Walk-in Services – TDO is a community clinic offering information and referral to tribal members. People may receive assistance with housing eviction, clearing criminal records, public assistance, or consumer issues.

Community Outreach – TDO educates clients, stakeholders, and the community on topics from Know Your Rights, to Consumer Education and How to Navigate the DOC.

Psychology Services – TDO's clinical psychology doctoral student provides assessment, therapy, and psycho-education in the TDO office and the Tribal Jail.

Flathead Reservation Reentry Program (FRRP)– Started in 2015, TDO's reentry services are offered to members of any federally recognized tribe who are transitioning back to the Flathead Reservation from a correctional facility, and who are most at risk of recidivism due to co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders. At the completion of the second year of reentry services, the recidivism rate among FRRP clients was 34%, a marked reduction from those entering the program in 2015.

Funding

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes fund TDO's base operations. Special programming is funded through grants—most recently, \$750,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Second Chance Act grant, to implement FRRP another 3 years.