



KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC DEFENSE

King County Council Law and Justice Committee: DPD's Annual Report



Agenda

- Annual Report Overview
 - Excessive Workloads
 - Morale and Staffing
 - What we have been doing in response
 - Review of Assignments and Staffing Levels
 - 10 FTEs from Council
 - Requested ~12 FTEs due to spike in Assignments
- Costs of Legal System
- Collaboration Efforts with PAO
- Staffing Model and Credit Policy



Annual Report: A Year of Transition and Continued Progress

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dpd/about-public-defense/plans-reports/2024-annual>

How many people did we represent in 2024?

Here's a snapshot:

- **4,829** clients who were facing felony charges in King County Superior Court
- **3,771** clients who were facing misdemeanor charges in Seattle Municipal Court
- **2,286** clients who were facing misdemeanor charges in King County District Court
- **763** cases involving dependency or the termination of parental rights, in which DPD represents either a parent or a child
- **4,010** clients who were facing involuntary commitment
- **832** clients who were facing juvenile criminal matters



Excessive Workloads

- Thank you for the Executive and Council's support for Phase I of the WSBA standards (which start on July 2, 2025).
- Our annual report delves into how excessive workloads are one of the biggest concerns for retention and staff morale.
- Implementation of the WSBA standards has helped reduce our attrition and also is often a reason cited by our incoming staff.
- We will be reviewing what we have been doing in response and how it is connected to Phase I and hiring.

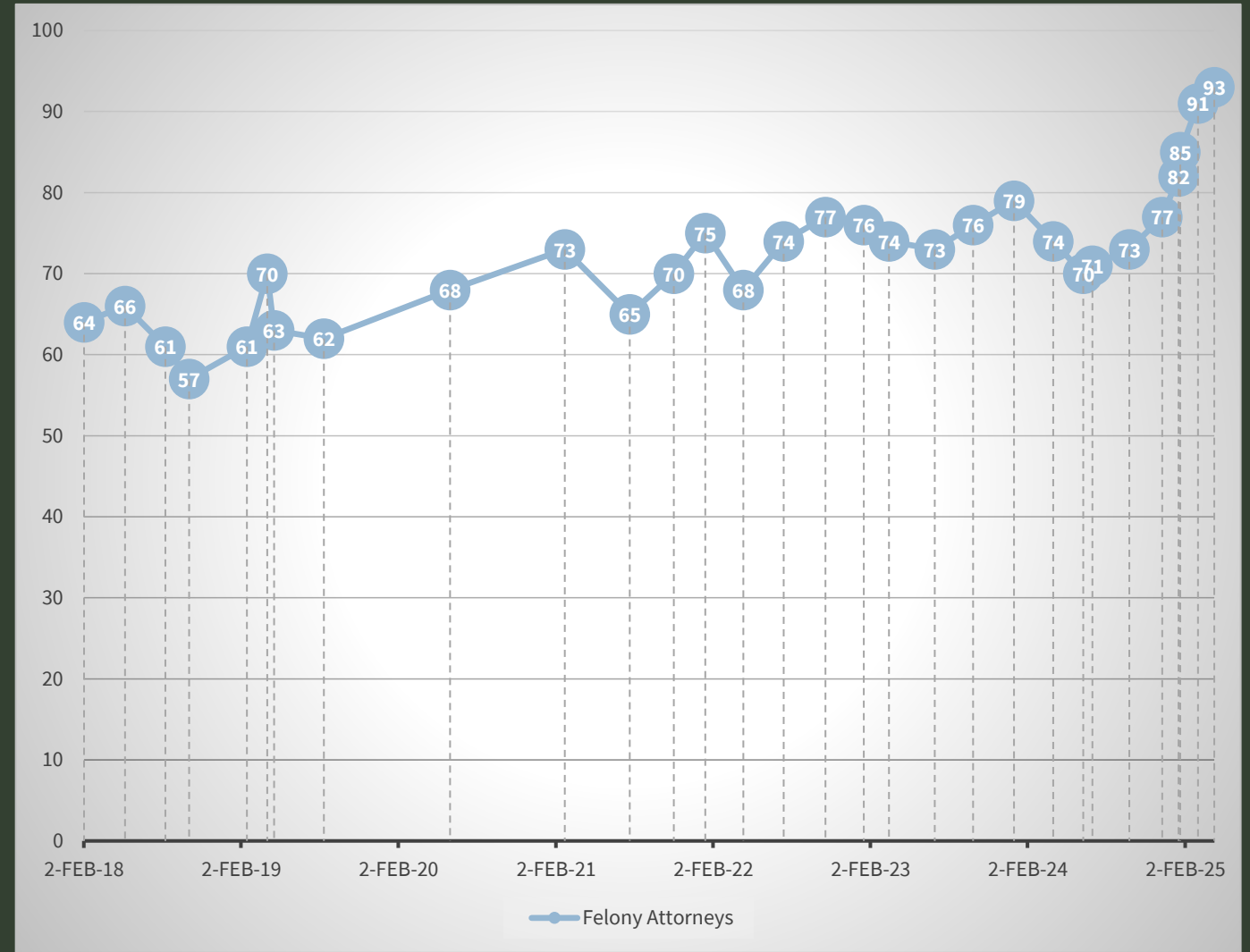
Preparation for Phase I of the WSBA Standards

- Thank you to the Executive for the support in the budget process (34 FTEs).
- Thank you to the Council for the additional 10 FTEs granted in the budget process.
- Thank you to our Staff and Supervisors for getting ready to start Phase I.



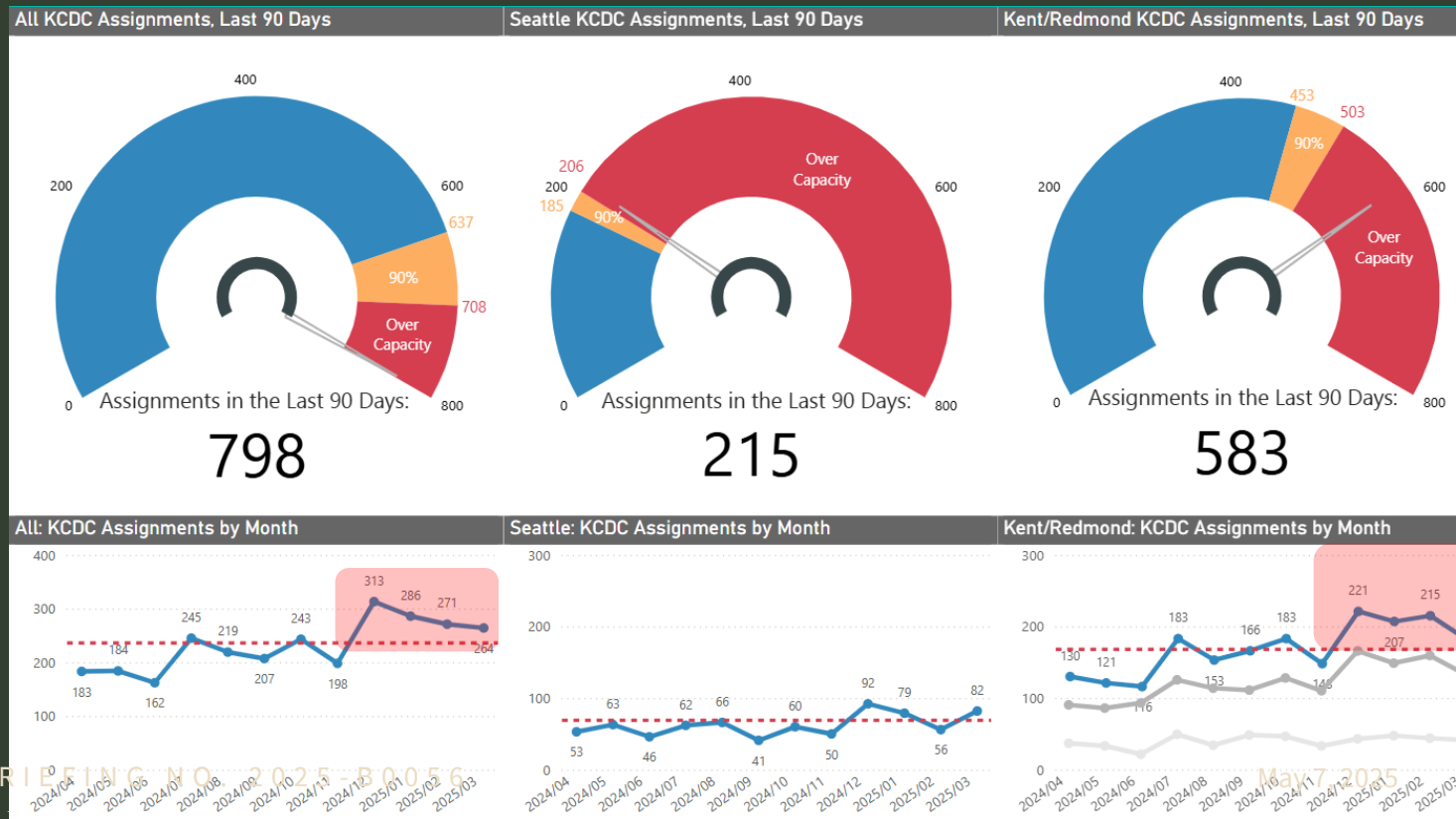
Felony Staffing

- The additional staff Council granted went to Felonies.
- Able to do this due to success in hiring and work by supervisors and staff.
- This helps with attorney retention.
- This is also how we will be able to meet Phase I's start.



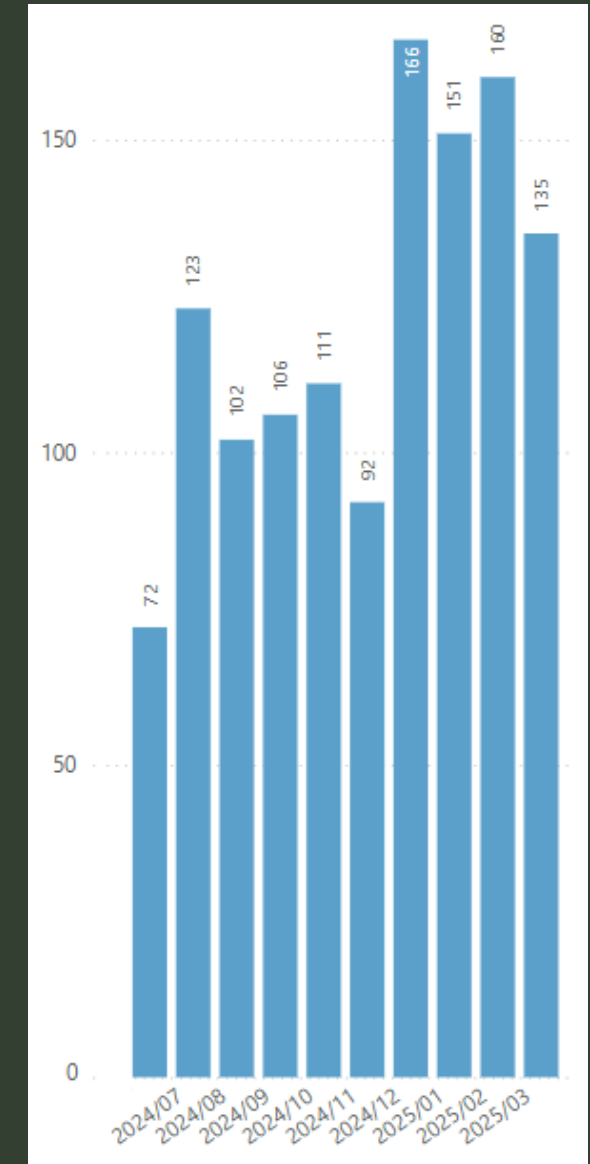
Assignment Trends: Misdemeanors

- King County Misdemeanor assignments higher which contribute to excessive caseloads.



Assignment Trends: Kent Misdemeanors

- November – 92 assignments.
- December 166 assignments (**80%** increase as compared to November).
- January – 151 assignments (**64%** increase as compared to November).
- February – 161 assignments (**75%** increase as compared to November).
- March – 135 assignments (**47%** increase as compared to November).
- Currently we have about 11 caseload carrying attorneys in KCDC (9 at ACAD and 2 at SCRAPD).
- 5 more attorneys would be a 45% increase. Part of our Omnibus request.



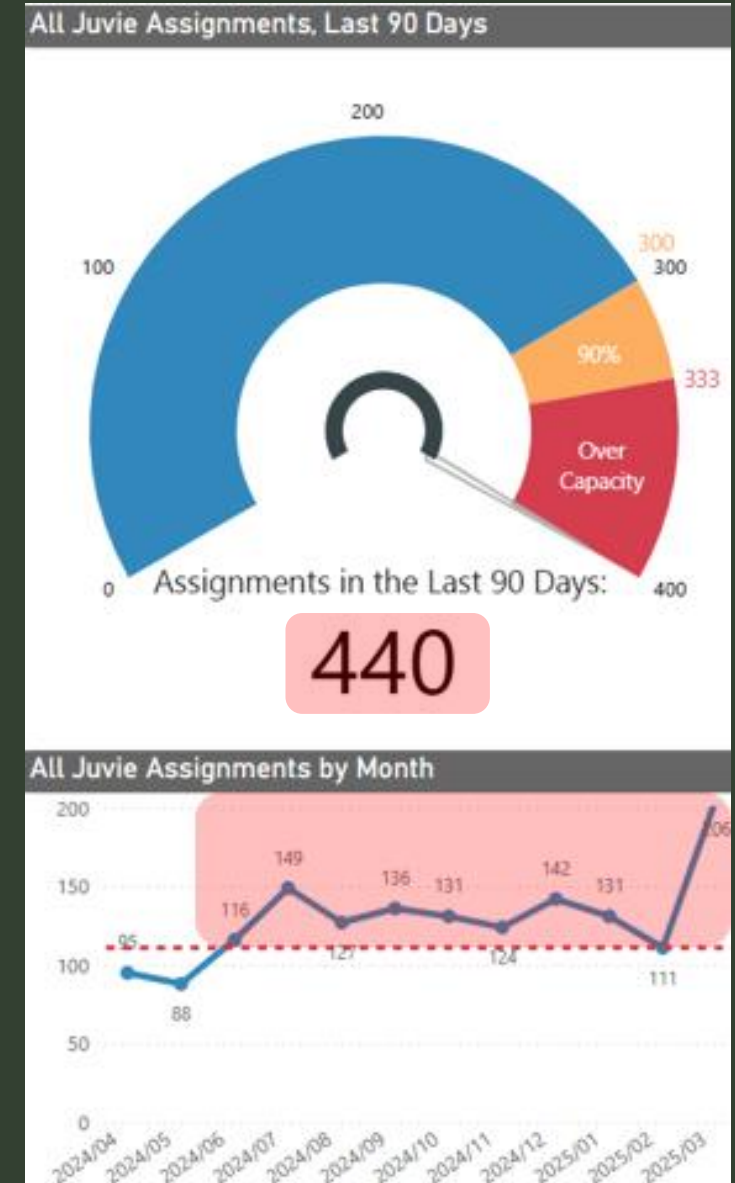
Assignment Trends: Juvenile

Exceeding our redline for the last 90 days.

March had an 85% increase over February.

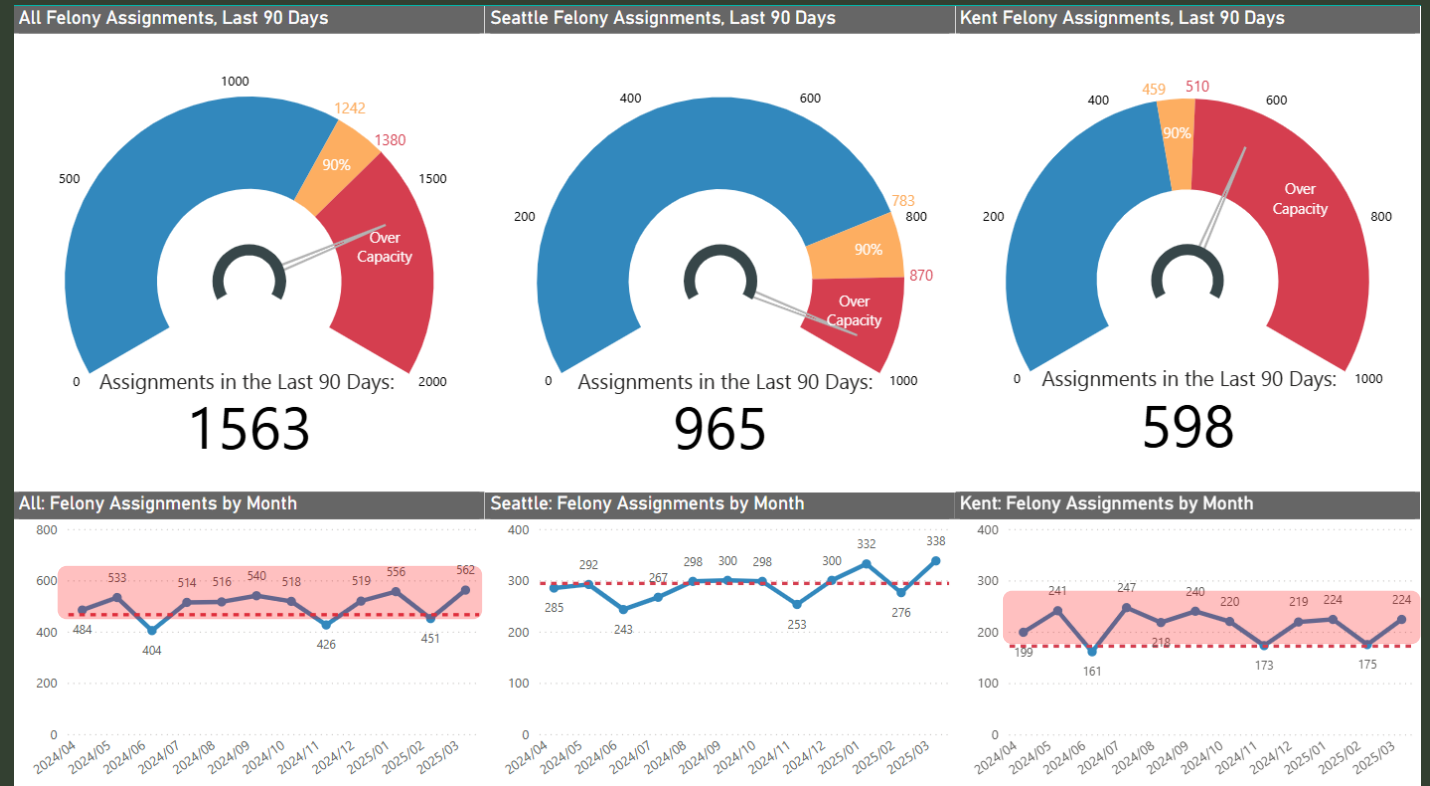
Last 10 months have been high.

April will be significantly lower than March, but our average still very high.



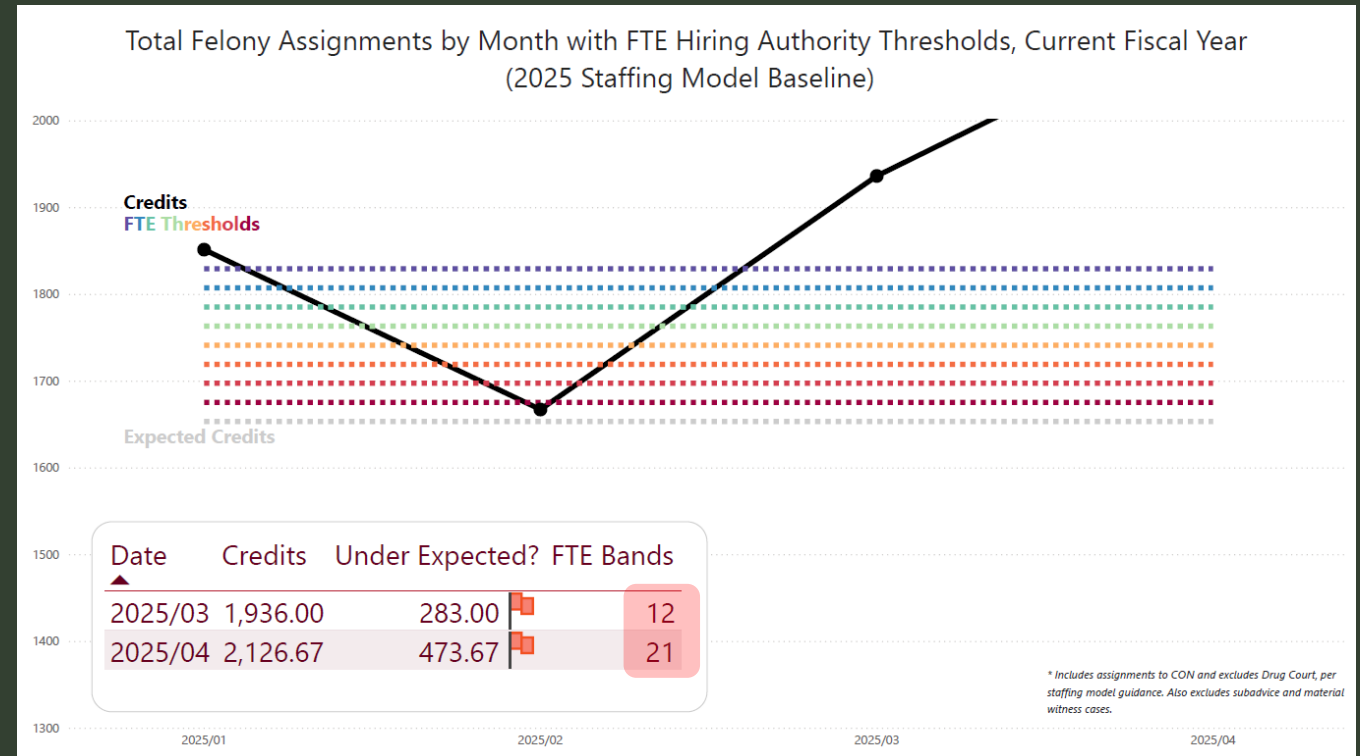
Assignment Trends: Felony

- Our felony practice represents the largest volume of representation.
- High overall; Kent in particular.
- Working to add staffing in Kent.
- 9 months out of 12 higher than our modeling.



Felony Triggers

- The budget authorizes hiring based on sustained increases in assignments to help with caseloads.
- Two consecutive months.
- Last year was the first time we hit a trigger and got 1 FTE which we hired immediately.
- We expect to get about 12 triggers once we finalize April's numbers.
- PSB has double checked our calculation.



Hiring

- We have been very successful in hiring.
- Collaborated with unions (SEIU 925 and Teamsters 117) to participate in the KC referral bonus program.
- Bar Journal Ads in different states.
- Posting on job websites and using LinkedIn.
- Hired a class of about 50 to start in the fall: largest class ever.
- Hired 22 laterals. Hiring in classes to promote community and consistent training.
- Also hiring professional staff (mitigation specialist, legal assistants, paralegals, and investigators).



Hiring (January 1 to May 2, YoY)

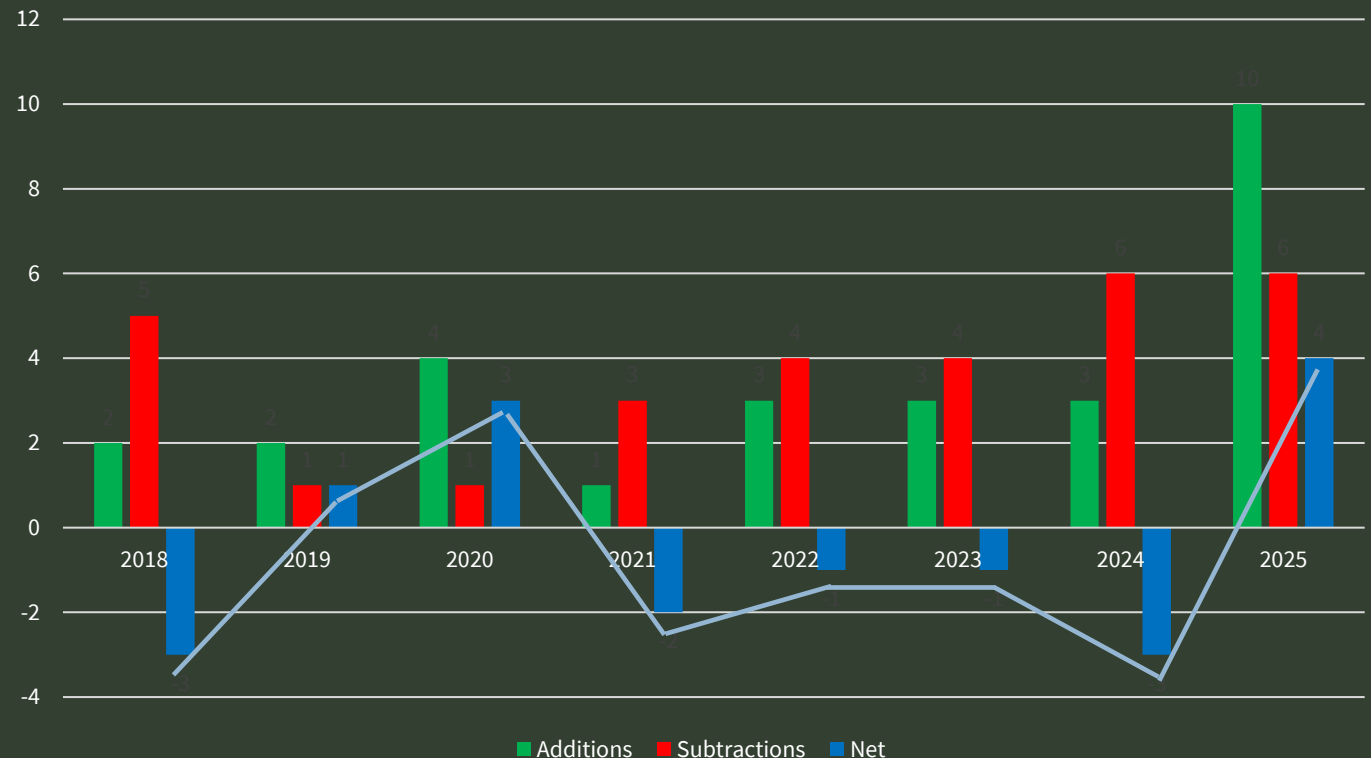
- Higher number of interviews offered, but similar pass rates.
- Lower percentage accepted, but much larger offer numbers.

Metric	2024	2025	% Difference
# of Applicants	29	59	103%
# of States	4	14 + International	250%
% of Applicants Offered an Interview	52%	69%	
% of Interviews Passed	47%	49%	
% of Passed Interviews Accepted	75%	67%	

Q1 YoY Hiring and Attrition

- Biggest Q1 hiring in last 8 years. Next highest year was 4.
- Still added a net 4 lawyers.

*already have 12 slated to start in June.





Costs of the Legal System

UNSUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Efforts to Reduce the Costs: Collaboration Efforts with PAO

- We have a responsibility to be appropriately using public funds.
- While we do not want a budget shortfall; often necessity is the mother of invention.
- We believe the county should be implementing evidence-based systemic reforms that will reduce the cost of the legal system without compromising public safety.
- We have been attempting to collaborate with the PAO around these ideas.
- PAO appears to be moving in the opposite direction given current filing trends.
- DPD will continue to make every effort to continue to collaborate with the PAO around ways to reduce the size and cost of the criminal legal system while promoting public safety and rehabilitation.

Staffing Model and Credit Policy

- DPD leadership has been meeting with PSB regularly to update our staffing model in preparation for the next biennium budget.
- We have created a draft credit policy and shared that with our unions as part of our negotiations.
- We hope to have a credit policy in place before July 2, 2025 (start of Phase I).



Thank you

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[HTTPS://KINGCOUNTY.GOV/EN/DEPT/DPD](https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dpd)