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LACBA's Independent Juvenile Defender Program Receives National Recognition from the American Bar Association as a 2018 Exemplary Defense Project

IJDP is the first appointed counsel program in California to provide a full range of social welfare and legal services to support juvenile defendants and their attorneys

LOS ANGELES, MARCH 7, 2018 – The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), one of the largest voluntary metropolitan bar associations in the country, announced that its Independent Juvenile Defender Program (IJDP) will be recognized by the American Bar Association (ABA) as an Exemplary Defense Project for 2018 at its The 13th Annual Summit on Public Defense Improvement on April 20, 2018, in Chicago, IL.

“We are thrilled that LACBA’s Independent Juvenile Defender Program attorneys and staff have been recognized for their hard work and innovation,” said IJDP’s Directing Attorney, Cyn Yamashiro. “I’m delighted to be part of a national conversation on the provision of high quality legal services to indigent criminal defendants.”

IJDP was established in 2017 through a collaboration of Los Angeles County and LACBA in response to longstanding concerns over the quality of legal services provided Los Angeles’ youth. The program pioneered a unique support model that provides appointed counsel access to mental health experts, investigators, appellate support, and disability advocacy. IJDP recruits and vets attorneys for admission and provides intensive training and ongoing attorney assessment.

The hallmarks of IJDP are holistic representation, cutting-edge resources, and data driven oversight. Yamashiro directs the program and leads a team that includes four program coordinators, an appellate attorney, a resource attorney, a psychologist, and an investigator. The program oversees 50 attorneys on four panels, representing youth from Lancaster in Northern Los Angeles County to Long Beach in the South.

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IJDP Receives ABA Recognition

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To date, IJDP has represented clients in more than 1600 cases in Los Angeles County and is one of three programs recognized nationally this year for this prestigious honor.

The Exemplary Defense Project of the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants (SCLAID) recognizes public defender organizations, assigned counsel programs, or other programs providing indigent defense services for exemplary, replicable projects of any size that enhance an organization's ability to serve clients and/or their communities.

Since its founding in 1920, SCLAID has studied issues relating to the delivery of legal services to the poor and has provided expert support and technical assistance to individuals and organizations seeking to improve indigent defense and legal aid in states throughout the nation. The Committee convenes chief defenders, state supreme court justices, state legislators, bar and other leaders to engage in regional and national dialogue concerning improvements in indigent defense delivery and access to civil justice.

For more information on IJDP, please visit www.lacba.org/ijdp or call (213) 896-6427.

About the Los Angeles County Bar Association

The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) is one of the largest voluntary metropolitan bar associations in the nation and has more than 15,000 members. LACBA is engaged in advancing the administration of justice and meeting the professional needs of lawyers. For more information on LACBA, visit www.lacba.org.

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