



PARTNERS
FOR JUSTICE

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



As we look back on 2024, there is so much for us to be proud of.

We onboarded our **largest-ever** cohort of Client Advocates, who joined a nationwide team that served more individuals than ever before. They collectively helped **more than 9,500 people** comply with the terms of their court cases and connect with life-changing services like healthcare, housing, education, employment, and access to food. On top of that, Advocates were **more successful than ever** in connecting their clients to these services, **completing 80% of their service goals**. Critically, when Advocates told the stories of their clients and the work they did together in the form of mitigation, it **reduced jail exposure by over 3,000 years of incarceration in 2024 alone**.

In our capacity-building program, we continued to scale our impact through statewide partnerships in Illinois and Missouri, while breaking new ground with a community-based public defense initiative in Chicago. Our Collaborative Defense Toolkit is also nearing completion, and last year, we published our first major report in the form of our six-year lookback. We received excellent press for our programming and launched two exciting projects with researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University. We also remain grateful for the generosity of our individual and institutional supporters, who make it possible to continue this impactful work.

This year is off to a quick start: we've launched new Client Advocate programs in New Jersey and Colorado, as well as capacity-building projects in four locations. As we press ahead in 2025, we find ourselves returning to some familiar questions: How can we continue to level up? How can we adapt and continue to drive collaborative practice in a constantly changing landscape?

If 2024 was a year of sustained growth and increased success, we expect 2025 to be a year of cementing the change we have created and deepening our ability to find resources for families, especially as those resources become more scarce. We are looking forward to early results from our research partners' evaluation of Collaborative Defense, which we hope will provide quantitative validation of the impact we know this model creates.

The fact remains: we remain focused on our mission—**transforming public defense nationwide**.

We could not do this work without our staff, Client Advocates, board members, and supporters. Thank you for your belief and support in this cause.



Emily Galvin-Almanza
Founder and Co-Executive Director



Rebecca Solow
Founder and Co-Executive Director

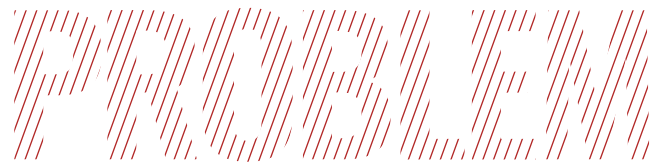


A LETTER FROM EMILY & REBECCA

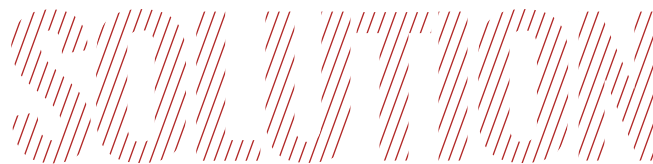
TABLE OF CONTENTS



5	OUR SOLUTION FOR SAFETY AND PROSPERITY
6	WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE DEFENSE?
7	CLIENT ADVOCATE PROGRAM
10	CAPACITY BUILDING
13	SHAPING DISCOURSE
15	ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024
17	CLIENT FUND UPDATE
19	FINANCIALS
21	THANK YOU



The United States faces a public safety crisis: people go to jail more than 7 million times every year, with 1 in 5 arrested more than once. Low-level, non-serious offenses make up more than 80% of arrests. This has left us with a punishment system impacting the lives of nearly half of American families. And this punishment system—costing \$182 billion a year—has had essentially zero impact on the crime rate. Negative impact from incarceration is a certainty and pervades all aspects of a person's life. Incarceration leads to family separation, housing instability, a halt in economic mobility, and decreased public health and public safety. The American punishment system does not make us safer, it makes things worse.



COLLABORATIVE DEFENSE

Odds are, you know someone represented by a public defender. In this country's courts, 8 out of 10 people cannot afford a lawyer and rely on our public defense system. Half of Americans have had a loved one ensnared in this system, meaning that one out of every three people has likely had a loved one who worked with a free lawyer. It's a staggering number of people. It's also why public defender offices—when properly resourced—can become robust engines of public safety, public health, and economic mobility. Collaborative Defense is the key to this transformation, and our Client Advocate Fellowship Program and Capacity Building Program help public defenders get there.

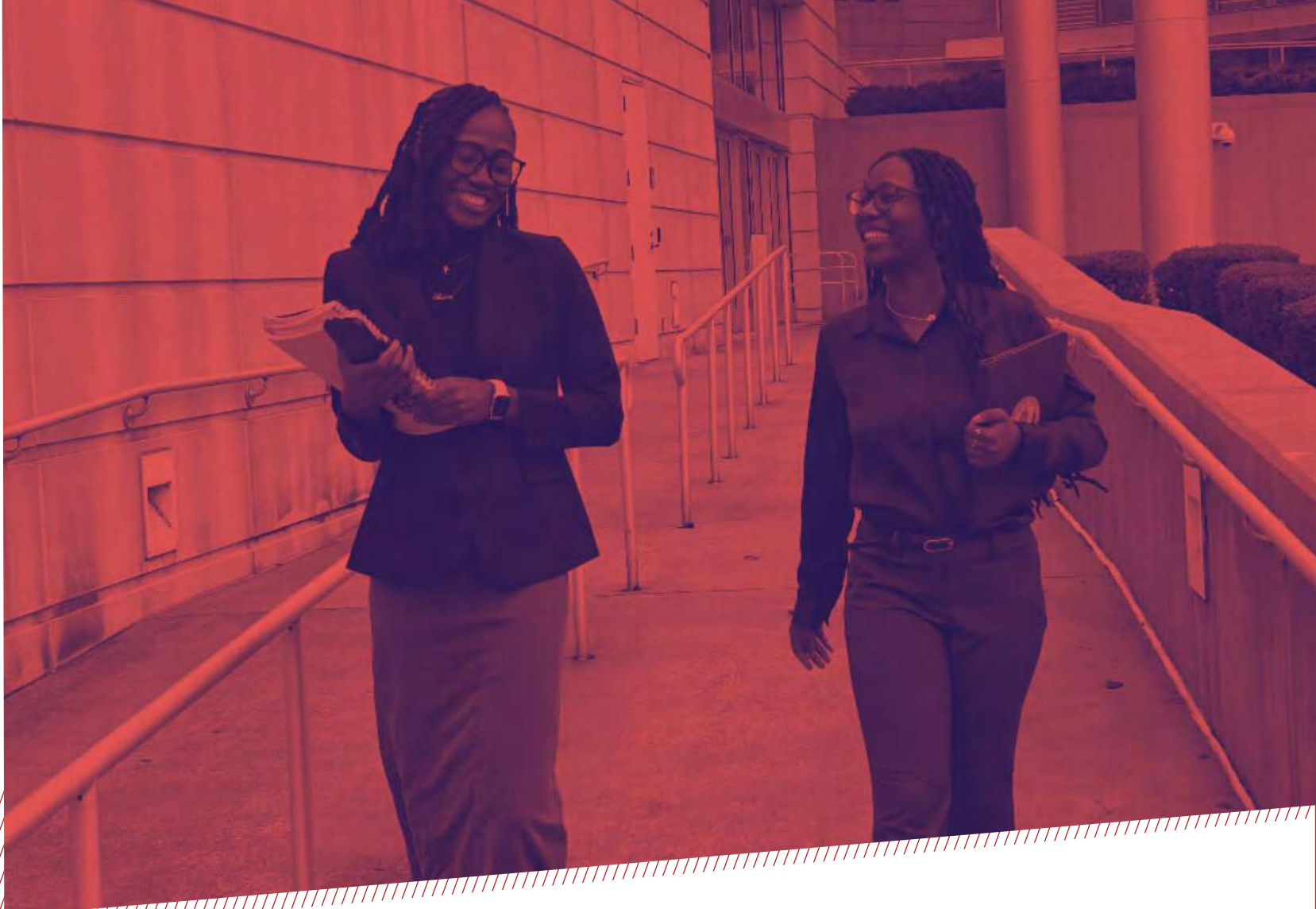
WHY PUBLIC DEFENSE?

Public defenders are a readily available and high-impact existing provider often overlooked since most efforts to address this crisis focus on policing, prosecution, or reentry systems.

Public defenders have immense reach: they work with about 80% of people accused of crimes.

Public defenders are upstream, automatically assigned (zero barrier to entry), and can foster trust through full, legally-protected confidentiality.





CLIENT ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Our flagship program, the Client Advocate Fellowship Program, recruits, trains, and develops the next generation of leaders by embedding early-career professionals within public defender offices. Advocates work one-on-one, offering a high-value service access point that helps each client with 2-7 separate needs. Their range is substantial, helping their clients navigate systems and benefits to providing specialized mitigation and assisting with early representation.

The Client Advocate Fellowship Program has grown rapidly since we placed our first teams in 2018. PFJ Advocates collectively worked with over **9,500 people in 2024**, providing nearly **11,500 unique services**.

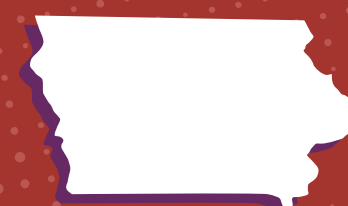
Advocates supported their clients to meet **80% of their identified goals**, serving more people more effectively than ever before.

CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES



DELAWARE

An individual expressed an interest in attending college. The person worked with their Advocate on an application, and the Advocate helped gather the necessary documents and submit the college application.



IOWA

An Advocate wrote a mitigation report on behalf of a young person born outside the United States. The individual had lost their son in a tragic accident and their involvement with the criminal legal system stemmed from abuse and health challenges. The individual's attorney used the mitigation and successfully convinced the court to suspend their ten-year prison sentence, bringing this person home far earlier than expected.



CALIFORNIA

An individual was referred by their attorney for help with obtaining a driver's license. They were unhoused and fleeing from domestic violence. Their Advocate connected them to mental health care and emergency shelter, which led to permanent housing. Their case was dismissed after they completed diversion.



LOUISIANA

After a person's case was dropped, they connected with an Advocate to discuss their options upon returning home. The Advocate helped they follow up on an employment opportunity, which the individual secured successfully.

IN 2024, WE WELCOMED BRAND NEW PROGRAMS:

- ★

The Albany County (NY) Public Defender's Office
- ★

Cumberland County (PA) Public Defender's Office
- ★

Hinds County (MS) Public Defender's Office
- ★

Law Office of the Public Defender, DeKalb County (GA)
- ★

Law Office of the Cook County (IL) Public Defender
- ★

Snohomish County (WA) Public Defender's Association
- ★

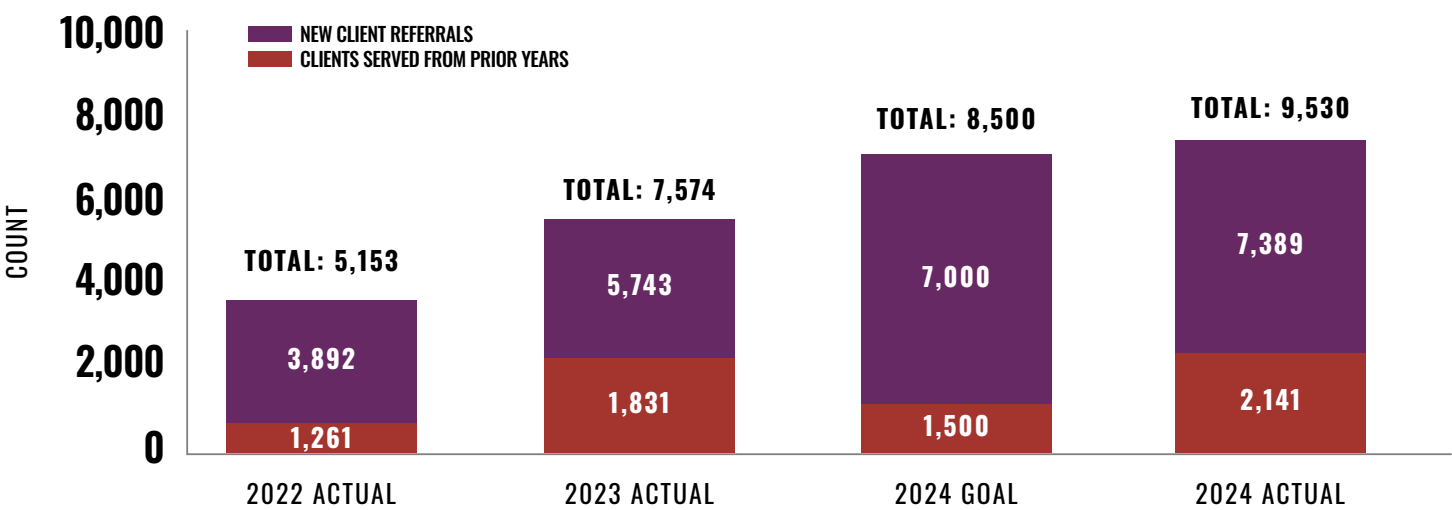
Virginia Indigent Defense Commission
- ★

The New Jersey Office of the Public Defender
- ★

The Colorado State Public Defender

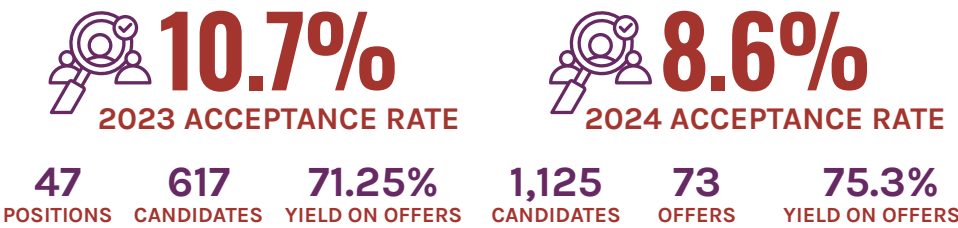


PEOPLE SERVED PER YEAR



CLIENT ADVOCATE PROGRAM RECRUITMENT

BY THE NUMBERS



CAPACITY BUILDING

Our Capacity Building Program teams up with defender leadership nationwide to assess, advise, and assist them in implementing Collaborative Defense in their agencies. The team also trains staff attorneys and support staff on the enmeshed penalties of criminal legal contact and creates resources for collaboration, such as new intake procedures, referral network management, data collection, and community resource guides.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS IN 2024

- **Cook County, IL** PFJ continued supporting the implementation of two new community defense hubs in Chicago, which will open to clients in 2025.
- **Missouri** As part of continued support for the Missouri State Public Defender, we helped developed a client feedback survey, trained MSPD staff, testified at advisory board meetings, and worked with MSPD to chart the next phase of expansion for its Holistic Services Division.
- **Illinois** We partnered with the Office of State Pretrial Services to deploy Mitigation Specialists at three public defender offices across the state, with more to come.
- **Northampton County, PA** PFJ worked with the public defender to obtain funding for and are working towards the implementation of a new client services role in the office.

ORGANIZATIONS WE'VE HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO WORK WITH





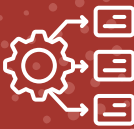


In 2025, we continue our ongoing projects and are launching a new partnership with the San Joaquin Public Defender's Office. Most excitingly, we will launch our Collaborative Defense Toolkit. Funded by the Robert Wood

Johnson Foundation, the toolkit is a free public resource allowing defenders to adapt practices and systems quickly, bringing powerful collaborative defense to the communities they serve.

WHAT IS IN THE COLLABORATIVE DEFENSE TOOLKIT?

The Collaborative Defense Toolkit is a free, publicly accessible resource bank that provides materials and strategies to public defenders for incorporating Collaborative Defense into their practice. We expect the first version to be completed by the summer of 2025, the toolkit will include a variety of resources, including:

-  **SAMPLE CLIENT SURVEYS**
-  **SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS**
-  **SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS**
-  **REFERRAL FORMS**
-  **COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDES**
-  **CASE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES**

SHAPING DISCOURSE

Transforming public defense—not just here and there, but everywhere—is an audacious goal, and re-imagining a massive public system with deeply entrenched challenges requires influence and support. To make Collaborative Defense the national norm, we are making it part of the national conversation.

In 2024, we leveled up our external influence efforts by publishing our six-year lookback document. The lookback is a comprehensive overview of our first six years, charting our journey from a two-site pilot to a twenty-one-state government-funded initiative.

We also secured media coverage in local, regional, and national publications. Our founder and co-executive director, Emily Galvin-Almanza, was featured in *The Nation* and appeared on the *Daily Zeitgeist*, a nationally syndicated podcast. Our longstanding Delaware partners were also featured in the state's largest newspaper and online news outlet, Delaware Online, via a wonderful interview with Delaware PFJ Supervisor Dawn Williams. And in early 2025, one of our Los Angeles Advocates, Sarah Mares, wrote a powerful op-ed published in *Teen Vogue*.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

In 2024, we launched two projects with researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University to measure the impact of Collaborative Defense through rigorously designed external evaluations. We expect to have some early results mid-2025 and are so excited to share them with you!

ARTICLE SPOTLIGHT

When Warriors Become Healers:
Collaborative Defense Is Improving Outcomes For Public Defender Clients, But Can It Also Strengthen A Trial Practice?

In 2024, Emily wrote a piece for the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice magazine. In it, she argued that not only is Collaborative Defense improving outcomes, but it is also enhancing trial practice.



2024 PFJ LEGACY AWARD

The Harris County Public Defender's Office received the PFJ Legacy Award for its groundbreaking work providing client-led, Collaborative Defense support to people facing criminal charges. The award is presented annually to one defender organization in the nation that embodies the gold standard in public defense.

The Harris County Public Defender's Office was selected for its commitment to Collaborative Defense and its innovative Holistic Services Division.

COLLABORATIVE DEFENSE CONFERENCE 2024

In September, we hosted our third annual Collaborative Defense Conference, which proved to be the largest and most empowering yet. From trauma-informed advocacy to elevator pitch workshops, there was something special for each and every one of the 150+ attendees who joined us in Houston to collaborate, learn, and hone their craft.

Our staff spoke about the power of family defense and shared strategies on how to keep parents and children together. There was a panel of chief defenders discussing the harms of pretrial incarceration and how public defenders can act as the first line of defense. The conference also featured a session led by Client Advocates on how to address the financial impact on clients of court-ordered programs.



MEETING CLIENTS' URGENT NEEDS

We pride ourselves on offering the best possible wraparound, Collaborative Defense team, and a critical part of that work is our Client Emergency Fund.

Dollars from the Fund go directly to pay for a client's basic but vital needs. It doesn't take much to make an impact: \$20 can be the difference between a healthy return home from jail and a mental health crisis, between a successful job interview or continuing unemployment. When we can offer these one-time boosts to our clients, we can substantially increase stability and success.

In 2024, Client Advocates used the Fund to pay for everything from vital documents, from birth certificates and driver's licenses, to impound fees, bus passes, medicines, and carshare rides.

All in all, **\$79,953** was used to help nearly 1,100 individuals during their time of need.



SMALL CHANGE CAN CHANGE LIVES HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW:

\$48

FOR A TENT AFTER AN INDIVIDUAL'S CAR WAS TOWED AND IMPOUNDED

\$25

FOR A RETURNING CITIZEN'S TRAIN RIDE HOME FROM PRISON

\$62.50

FOR A PREPAID CELLPHONE SO AN INDIVIDUAL COULD STAY IN TOUCH WITH THEIR ATTORNEY

\$13.39

FOR HEADPHONES TO HELP AN INDIVIDUAL STAY GROUNDED DURING A MENTAL HEALTH FLARE-UP

\$8

FOR A PLANNER TO HELP A CLIENT KEEP THEIR APPOINTMENTS

\$4.65

FOR A HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT SO THAT AN INDIVIDUAL CAN ENROLL IN A JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

\$45.92

FOR A PET CARRIER SO A BELOVED PET CAN JOIN THEIR OWNER IN RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT

\$135

TO COVER ONE WEEK OF RENT FOR AN INDIVIDUAL LIVING IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

“The client fund is absolutely critical to my work as an Advocate. I've used it to call Ubers for clients to get to emergency shelter and medical care, to pay for a client's phone bill, to send clients hygiene items when they're in custody, to buy clients food and clothing when they are unhoused, and much more. For so many clients, the single barrier preventing them from success in court is the cost of their court requirements. Being able to pay for their certificates, fees, and court-ordered classes with the client fund has helped dozens of my clients successfully finish their diversion and probation and avoid further penalties in the criminal legal system.”

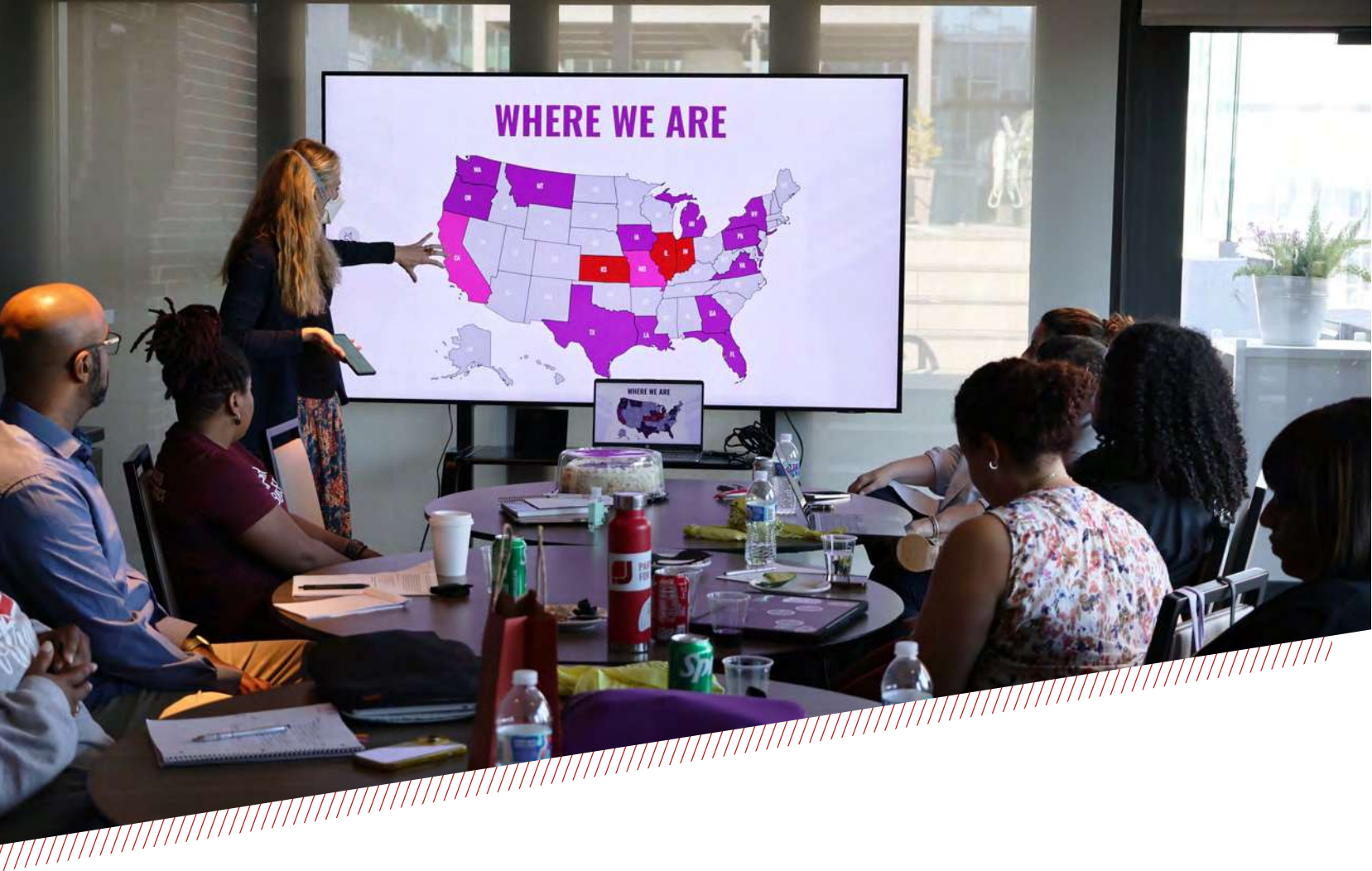


JAYA DUCKWORTH
Client Advocate,
Los Angeles County
Public Defender's Office

“Our client fund helps bridge the gap between court expectations and our clients' realities. Many of us take everyday necessities like transportation for granted, but for our clients, the lack of access to these resources can be the difference between freedom and incarceration. Attending court is already stressful, and financial barriers only add to that burden. By providing support where it's needed most, our client funds ensure that individuals can meet their legal obligations without adding unnecessary hardship, making a world of difference in their lives.”



MAE REDMOND
Client Advocate,
Missouri State
Public Defender



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

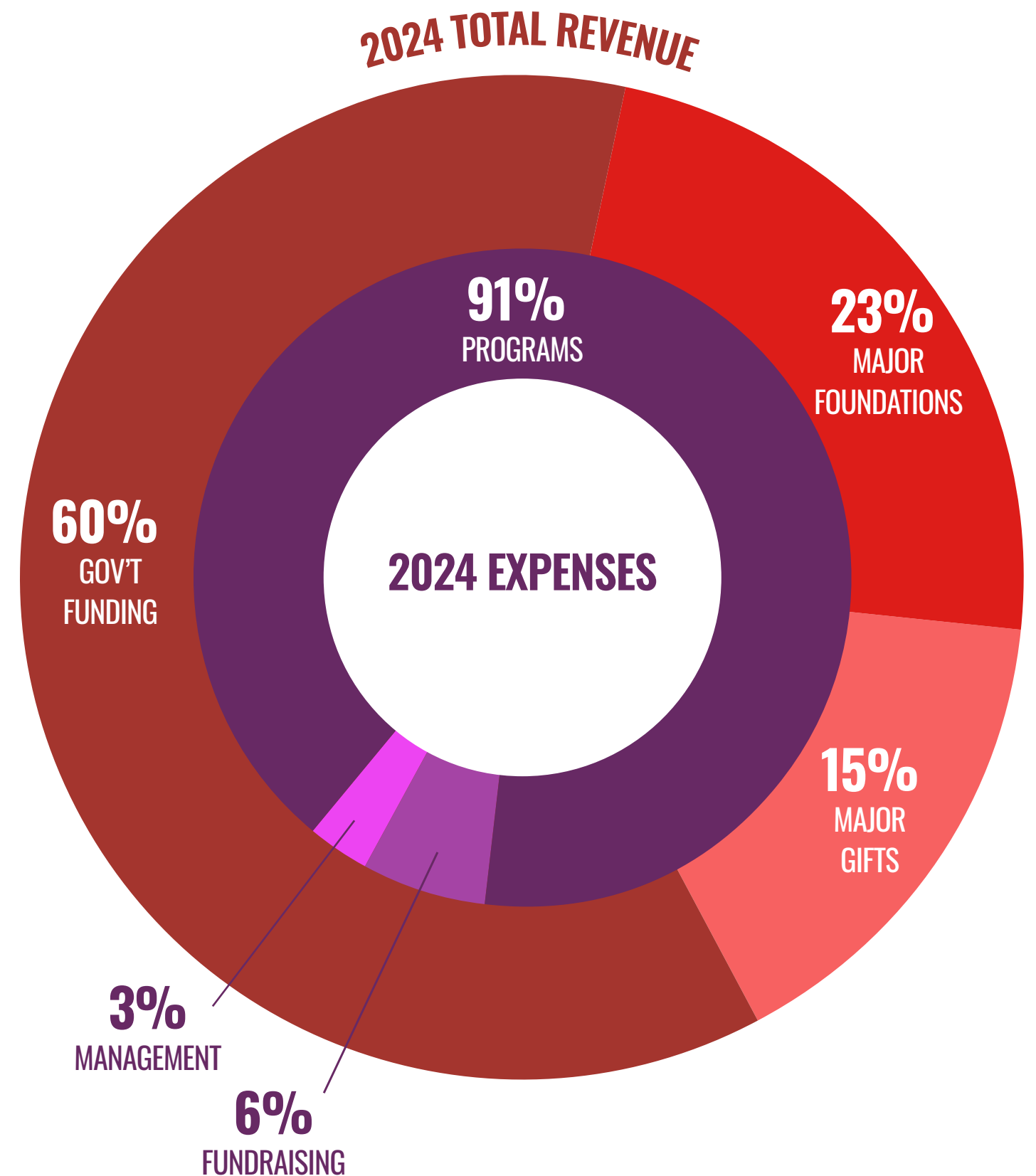
A ROBUST PRESENT AND A STRONG FUTURE

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FINANCIALS?

Click here or scan the QR code.



Our financials reflect a strong year of growth and continued investment in our core programs. Resources dedicated to PFJ continue to be laser-focused on our mission of transforming public defense across the United States -- supporting activities like training Client Advocates, developing new Collaborative Defense practices, and ensuring the people we support have access to emergency funding for their basic needs.





THANK YOU



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