



Office of Court Administration
Montgomery County

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FINDINGS REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH EXPERTS

At the last meeting of the Mental Health Court Ad Hoc Committee, I was tasked with researching the use of psychologists and psychiatrists in the District Courts and County Courts at Law. The three categories generally in which I was looking for the purpose of hiring the expert were:

- A. Competency Evaluation
- B. Mitigation/Independent Psychologist for the Defense
- C. Other Expert Witness

The scope of my study involved orders and invoices which were paid within FY2016.

Of the 84 orders and invoices examined:

- 33, or 39.2% were for Competency Evaluation;
- 22, or 26.2% were for Mitigation or other reason requested by the Defense;
- 3, or 3.6% were to determine Juvenile Lack of Responsibility;
- 1, or 1.2% was to determine Unfitness to Proceed (Juvenile); and
- 23, or 27.4% was for some reason unrelated to Mental Health.

Wide variation in the cost of competency evaluation was observed, with single defendant costs as low as \$650 to a high of \$3,000*, while wider variations occurred for mitigation (a low of \$650 to a high of \$8,500).

Recognizing that there is not a perfect parity between costs associated with Experts (Mental Health or otherwise), if we were to apply the percentage of appointments above to actual FY15 expenditures, we would get the following:

- \$156,123 for Competency Evaluations
- \$104,348 for Mitigation or other MH purposes
- \$109,127 for other Experts