

Forensic Evaluations

Forensic evaluators deliver opinions to the courts regarding the mental state and psychological functioning of defendants facing charges. The approximately 70 forensic evaluators employed by the Department of Social and Health Services' Office of Forensic Mental Health Services are doctoral level psychologists with additional training and expertise in the specialized field of the application of psychological principles to the courtroom. These units assist in the delivery of services that help ensure that the rights afforded to defendants by our Constitution are maintained and the safety of the public is recognized. Some of the important duties performed by forensic evaluators include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting forensic competency to stand trial and mental state at the time of the offense evaluations for the courts of Washington State.
- Collecting data such as treatment, education, criminal, and social histories to include in evaluations.
- Administering, scoring, interpreting, and reporting the results of psychological testing.
- Submitting forensic evaluations to the court.
- Preparing for and providing expert witness testimony regarding forensic evaluations or as requested or subpoenaed by the courts.

Forensic evaluators are held to high professional expectations and successfully defend their work, done at national best-practices standards, in municipal, district, superior and tribal courtrooms around the state.

Catchment Areas

The State is divided into two major regions responsible for completing evaluations in county jails, in local communities, and at state hospitals, on the east and west sides of the State.

The Eastern Regional Office is centered at Eastern State Hospital in Medical Lake. Evaluators stationed in the Eastern catchment area, comprised of the 20 counties east of the Cascade Mountains, complete evaluations in the jails located in each county as well as inpatient evaluations at Eastern State Hospital.

For the 19 counties located in the Western catchment areas, evaluations are completed in the following areas:

The Southern Regional Office (SRO) services Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz, Pacific, Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston, Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties, with evaluators stationed in Clark, Thurston, Mason and Kitsap counties.

The Central Regional Office (CRO) completes evaluations for courts in Pierce and Lewis County courts.

The Northern Regional Office (NRO) provides evaluations services to courts in King, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, and San Juan counties.

Inpatient Forensic Evaluation Services (IFES) provide evaluations to defendants sent to Western State Hospital for 15-day competency evaluations or competency restoration treatment, and forensic risk assessments for those adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity. Evaluators there also do civil commitments for defendants who cannot be restored to competency but are in need of continuing mental health treatment.

Competency restoration programs at Yakima, Maple Lane, and Ft. Steilacoom have three evaluators providing competency evaluations at the end of restoration periods.

Out of custody evaluations are done for defendants who have been released into the community on personal recognizance. Evaluators interview those defendants at attorneys' offices or courthouses in their community.