

Office of the Public Defender
Shelby County, Alabama
INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

www.shelbypublicdefender.org

P.O. Box 1652
Columbiana, AL 35051
(205) 669-3806

LEGAL REPRESENTATION - Our Office has been appointed to represent you in a criminal matter based on the Court's qualifying you as indigent. Our duty is to defend you at all court appearances and hearings including bench and jury trials, advocate on your behalf, investigate the evidence against you, research technical and factual defenses, negotiate the best possible settlement offer, and fully explain all of your options.

- We REPRESENT you only. We do not represent any alleged victim, a witness, the police, the District Attorney, or even the Judge.
- We **cannot** be your attorney in any civil case or in any matter in another jurisdiction. We will assign you a specific attorney from our office to handle your legal matters based on the exact nature and difficulty of the case.
- We are a **Public Defender's Office**, if you believe it is in your best interest to hire a private lawyer, we will fully support your decision and share all information we have with your retained attorney.

COURT ATTENDANCE - PLEASE DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR COURT. **You must be in court on all your court dates before 8:30 am.** If you do not appear, the Court may **revoke** your bond and you may be **re-arrested**. Verified excuses for medical emergencies, work or school must be provided to our office. **EXPECT TO SPEND ALL DAY IN COURT.** Do not bring food or drink into the courtroom.

- A NOTICE when to appear for court will be **mailed** to the **address listed in the court clerk's information system**. It is **very** important that your address is correct. A condition of your bond requires you report any change of address to the Court Clerk. **Please notify THE CLERK'S OFFICE and our Office with any new mailing address, telephone number, or e-mail address.**
- **If notice goes to a bad address and you do not come to court, your bond may be revoked by the Court and will be re-arrested.**

COMMUNICATIONS - Always contact our Office when you have any questions. We will try to answer them as soon as possible. We **cannot discuss confidential information** about your case with anyone else.

- **Telephone Calls** - You can call us at **(205) 669-3806**. Your telephone call may be routed to a voice mail system. Always leave **your name, telephone number and your question**. Calls are usually returned the day they are received. Please do not make repeated calls on the same issue. **We are not able to accept collect calls.**
- **Appointments** - If you need to meet with your attorney, please make an appointment.
- **Letters** - Our mailing address is **P.O. Box 1652, Columbiana, AL 35051**. We may respond by in-person visit, by e-mail, by telephone, or by letter. **Whenever there is new information on your case, we will contact you immediately.**

BOND REDUCTIONS - If you cannot make bail, we can file a bond reduction motion. However, please be aware that the local courts rarely reduce bond amounts.

DISCOVERY OF EVIDENCE - Our Office will **investigate** the facts, **research** defenses, and **negotiate** the best possible settlement offer. The District Attorney will GENERALLY produce all known discoverable evidence against you at the District Court level.

YOUTHFUL OFFENDER - If you were under 21 at the time of the offense, you **must** either **apply for** or **waive** youthful offender treatment. If you apply, your case will be continued so that a Youthful Offender Report can be prepared. The report will include your past criminal and/or juvenile record.

- The **Judge will decide** if you deserve this treatment as a youthful offender. Usually, it is only for first-time offenders involved in a relatively minor crime.
- If **Youthful Offender Status is granted**, you will have no adult criminal record, and you will face a maximum of three years punishment.
- If Youthful Offender status is denied, you will be treated just as any other adult.

SPECIALTY COURTS - Shelby County utilizes several specialty courts for certain **drug, mental health, and veteran matters**. These courts have strict qualification requirements, including approval from the District Attorney. THESE COURTS ARE NOT FOR ALL DEFENDANTS and have both benefits and disadvantages.

PRELIMINARY HEARINGS - If arrested on a **felony** case before the grand jury has issued an indictment, it will be set for a Preliminary Hearing, usually around 21 days after arrest.

- The judge simply decides if there is enough probable cause to bind your case over to wait the action of the grand jury. A majority of our cases reach a **settlement** at the **first** preliminary setting.
- Before **court**, our investigation will have already begun and we will have discussed your case with the District Attorney. Your attorney will meet with you **at court** to discuss our investigation and all your options.
- Your case **may be continued** at this preliminary stage to **investigate** more facts, **talk** with witnesses, law enforcement and negotiate with the District Attorney. If it is not settled at the District Court level, your case will be presented to the grand jury.

GRAND JURY - You will generally **not** be present at grand jury. It reviews **the State's evidence** and issues **Indictments** or **No Bills**. If indicted, your case will be set for **Arraignment**. If a no bill is returned, your case will be dismissed.

ARRAIGNMENT - You will receive a copy of the indictment and enter a plea to the charge(s) against you.

STATUS DOCKETS - These are set after Arraignment allowing for further discovery, pretrial pleadings and negotiation. If not disposed, your case will be placed on a **General Call Docket**.

JURY TRIALS - Your case may go to Trial. The **Judge decides** what cases are put on the **Trial Docket**.

- **After** the **Call Docket**, the Judge & prosecutors are **not** bound by any previous offer of settlement.
- Once your case is set for trial you **must** appear for a **Pre-Trial Conference**, a **Call Docket** and **every day** of your **Trial period**.