

## Washington Defender Association – Leadership Retreat

### Results from CITA supported work

**Introduction:** Our purpose for this event was: “Developing Defenders Into Effective Leaders, Advocates, and Agitators for Advancing Innovative Ideas for Clients and Communities.” Our principles for serving this purpose were:

- Recognize leadership in everyone
- Be Accepting and open to all ideas
- Consider those not in the room(those we represent, colleagues and communities)
- Empower with practice
- Building a plan to keep engaging and developing leadership
- Teach tools we use
- Be transparent at all stages
- Be BOLD!

From this place we developed an agenda for the event using a Storyboard format. See attached separately. This agenda included excellent race equity training, including systems-framework training, from JustLead WA, engaging in Purpose-to-Practice among the whole group to build a foundation of defender leadership work in Washington State, and then inspiration toward leadership from Ilham Askia (Gideon’s Promise).

A large and varied group of defenders from around Washington State joined the retreat this year. Below is a summary of the results of the parts of the agenda specifically supported by the Court Improvement Training Academy (CITA).

**1. Shared values and core individual purpose.** To begin, we engaged in exercises designed to begin the work toward shared mission. Here we asked folks to explore the question: Why is it important to develop leadership in the defender community? Each individual was interviewed by a partner (tool = “9 Whys”) on the questions, seeking to find core purpose. Each person then recorded their answer:

- Professional well-being, practice aligned with values.
- To make each other see everyone as people (including clients) – makes it harder to treat them poorly
- Because it makes my life easier.
- Hold system accountable – protect integrity of criminal legal system and society more broadly

- “Why is it important to find out how our clients would answer this question?”
- To develop support in the community who in turn support our work (especially to funders at budget time).
- Without leadership a vacuum is created that is filled by prosecutors, police, etc.
- Hope
- End harm
- Freedom
- Ensure people are treated as people
- The children are the future
- Fulfillment/happiness
- Make change in community/system
- To better leverage our power as the people who handle the majority of cases in the system, to create broad change
- Strong leadership means stronger representation
- To make the system more fair.
- Status quo is not sustainable.
- Fight systemic and government racism and classism.
- Level the playing field
- Sustain momentum for justice system reform initiatives
- Develop and sustain relationships with community-based partners providing services to mutual clients
- Value inherent dignity and worth of every person
- Identify non-traditional and informal options for young defenders to influence community - (Defense booth at the Fair!), voting, know your rights, etc.
- Effective democracy
- Provide a voice and reduce the human costs.
- Without us there is no justice
- To live in community better together
- Changing the structures in the criminal justice system that are part of keeping vulnerable and marginalized groups without power
- Stopping criminal justice system from targeting marginalized people

- Support younger/new defenders so they can stay and bring their insights and inspiration.

**2. Purpose.** We spent some time developing a shared mission statement for defender leadership work. The resulting statement developed by the whole room is:

**Cultivating and empowering defenders and the community to achieve equity!**

**3. Principles.** We then developed a set of principles by which we would serve our purpose:

- Leveraging power
- Ensure action steps are community centered
- Marshal community resources
- Respect leadership in everyone
- Public outreach and education
- Provide effective tools
- Lead to inspire
- Treat people fairly and equitably
- Create capacity to do more than litigate cases
- Include directly impacted people
- Increase recruitment among people of color, 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants, LGBTQ+ community.
- Don't presume who has answers.