

The Ten Principles' Role In State Reform Efforts

The *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System* have figured prominently in efforts to improve indigent defense systems in these states:

- **Michigan:** On April 27, 2002, as a result of cooperative efforts with the Michigan Public Defense Task Force, the Michigan State Bar voted to adopt the black letter of the *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System*, including an eleventh principle that states: "When there is a defender office, one function of the office will be to explore and advocate for programs that improve the system and reduce recidivism." The Michigan Public Defense Task Force, funded by the *ABA Gideon Initiative* and comprised primarily of community groups, is developing a plan for improved statewide public defense in Michigan. For more information on the efforts of the Task Force, contact Elizabeth Arnovits, MCCD Executive Director, at (517) 482-4161.
- **Mississippi:** Through the Mississippi Gideon Project (funded by the *ABA Gideon Initiative*), the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) and Southern Echo, Inc. are organizing community meetings throughout Mississippi to educate the public on the need for a statewide, state-funded public defender system in Mississippi to provide effective representation in felony, misdemeanor, youth court, and public school disciplinary proceedings. The *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System* appear on the front cover of pamphlets distributed at these meetings. For more information on the efforts of the Mississippi Gideon Project, contact Miriam Gohara, LDF Attorney, at (212) 965-2200.
- **Montana:** On February 14, 2002, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a class-action lawsuit against the State of Montana and seven counties alleging the constitutional deficiency of indigent defense services in those counties. In both its press release and an article entitled "The Public Defender Standards: How Montana Measures Up" (appearing in the March 2002 issue of *The Montana Lawyer* magazine), the ACLU illustrated how Montana fails to meet the *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System*. For more information, go to http://www.aclu.org/news/2002/mt_indigent_2.pdf.
- **Georgia:** On December 12, 2002, after two years of studying the indigent defense system, the Georgia Supreme Court Commission on Indigent Defense issued a report calling on the state to assume responsibility for paying for indigent defense services and to establish and enforce basic standards for indigent defense programs. The Commission embraced the *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System* in its report. In May 2003, Georgia enacted reform legislation that incorporated most of the Commission's recommendations and established a uniform circuit-wide public defender system. For more information on the efforts of the Georgia Supreme Court Commission on Indigent Defense, contact Cynthia Clayton, General Counsel, Administrative Office of the Courts, at (404) 656-6692.
- **Texas:** In February 2002, copies of the *ABA Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System* were distributed at the inaugural meeting on the Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense, a commission created by the historic Texas Fair Defense Act and charged with developing and enforcing uniform standards and guidelines for the 254 county indigent defense systems. For more information on the efforts of the Task Force, contact James D. Bethke, Task Force Director, at (512) 936-6994.