



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 5/12/2026

File #: 26-463

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Counsel

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

SUBJECT:

Attorney-Client Fee Agreement with Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP Regarding the Provision of Legal Services Related to Representation of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services in Connection with Juvenile Dependency Appellate Litigation on an As-Needed Basis (4/5 Vote Required)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve, and authorize the Interim County Counsel, or a designee thereof, to execute, the attached attorney-client fee agreement with Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP regarding the provision of legal services related to the representation of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services in connection with juvenile dependency appellate litigation on an as-needed basis (4/5 Vote Required); and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to provide the Humboldt County Counsel's Office with one (1) fully executed certified copy of the Board order related to this item.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommended actions support the following areas of the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan:

Area of Focus: Choose a topic.

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

The Humboldt County Counsel's Office represents the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") in juvenile dependency matters. Representing DHHS includes responding to juvenile dependency appeals. There are currently five (5) juvenile dependency appeals pending before the First District Court of Appeal. On average, the County Counsel's Office handles two (2) juvenile dependency appeals per month. Due to the significant increase in volume of juvenile dependency cases, and because juvenile dependency appeals require a rapid response, it may not be possible for the County Counsel's Office to keep up with the appellate work.

The law firm of Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl and Sugerman, LLP ("GKHS") has experience in handling overflow dependency appeals for

public entities. In 2022, the County of Humboldt entered into a similar agreement with GKHS, previously Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl, Angel & Sugerman, LLP, regarding the provision of legal services related to the representation of DHHS in connection with juvenile dependency appellate litigation due to vacancies in the County Counsel's Office.

Accordingly, the County Counsel's Office recommends that the Board approve, and authorize the Interim County Counsel, or a designee thereof to execute, the attached attorney-client fee agreement with GKHS regarding the provision of legal services related to the representation of DHHS in connection with juvenile dependency appellate litigation on an as-needed basis.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Social Services Fund (1160-508)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The legal services provided pursuant to the terms and conditions of the attached attorney-client fee agreement with GKHS will be compensated at hourly rates ranging from One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) to Four Hundred Ten Dollars (\$410.00) per hour. Expenditure appropriations related to the attached attorney-client fee agreement with GKHS have been included in the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 budget for DHHS - Social Services budget unit 1160-508.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Approval of the attached attorney-client fee agreement with GKHS will not impact current staffing levels.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board may choose not to approve the attached attorney-client fee agreement with GKHS regarding the provision of legal services related to the representation of DHHS in connection with juvenile dependency appellate litigation on an as-needed basis. However, this alternative is not recommended since it will impact County Counsel's ability to provide adequate legal services on dependency appeals.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attorney-Client Fee Agreement with Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP Regarding the Provision of Legal Services Related to Representation of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services in Connection with Juvenile Dependency Appellate Litigation on an As-Needed Basis

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: 07/19/2022

File No.: 22-939