

**WEST VIRGINIA  
PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS  
INSTITUTE**

**SELECTED SUMMARY**

**2024**

## **I. SUMMARY OF INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES**

- **SPECIAL PROSECUTORS 2024**
  - **429** cases assigned to Special Prosecutors during 2024 with an estimated savings to the counties of **\$849,420.00**
  - **8,351** cases assigned to Special Prosecutors on behalf of all **55** counties since creation of Institute with an estimated savings of **\$16,534,980.00** over that span
- **TRAINING 2024** – foundation for successful administration of justice in WV.
  - The Institute provided **2 Regular Training Courses** during 2024 reaching a total of **300** prosecutors.
  - The Institute also provided **Specialized Training Courses**;
    - The 2024 “**Newly Elected Prosecutor Course**” (**19** attendees.)
    - **ChildFirst/Finding Words**; Forensic Interviewing of Children courses are 5-day national programs for the frontline child abuse professional.
    - The Institute’s VAWRP presented on Violence Against Women Topics.
    - **Estimated Savings** to counties on prosecutor training equals **\$77,680.00**
  - Other Prosecution-Related Training
    - **52** Prosecutor based Key Personnel and Victim Advocates trained
    - Over **226** Law Enforcement Personnel trained
    - Many other disciplines within the Criminal Justice System were trained.
    - Updates on legislation, court cases & rules, policies and procedures, and best practices are essential information and are provided in summary form at each semiannual prosecutor’s conference.
- **LEGAL RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL ADVICE**
  - Provided frequent legal research on a variety of issues facing prosecutors and technical assistance to county prosecutors for prosecution related activities. Which yielded another **\$85,700.00** in county savings for the year.
- **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN RESOURCE PROSECUTOR**
  - Provided resources and assistance to local prosecutors in area of crimes of violence against women
- **INTERNET WEB PAGE**
  - Internet access for information to prosecutors
- **FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION FUND**
  - Administration of the fund, providing partial reimbursement for costs associated with sexual assault victim medical examinations
- **EXPERT WITNESSES**
  - Assisted local prosecutors with information concerning various experts

## **II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, elected prosecuting attorneys in the fifty-five counties in the State of West Virginia realized the need for a central office to provide certain essential services to prosecutor's offices. The ever-increasing complexity of criminal prosecution and the increasing workload imposed upon prosecutors' offices highlighted the need for professionalization of prosecution. Prosecutors concluded that the first step was to establish a central office to provide training and educational materials for each of the fifty-five county prosecutors' offices.

The West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Association, with the cooperation of the Kanawha County Commission and the Kanawha County prosecutor's office, applied for and received a grant from the West Virginia Criminal Justice and Highway Safety Office through the Edward Byrne Trust Fund. The first grant commenced in October 1992. A central office was established in the Kanawha County Prosecutor's Office which began providing educational materials and training to prosecutors across West Virginia.

The central office received two additional grants in the name of the Kanawha County Commission, however, after the fourth year, no funds were available for the continuation of any project, including the continuation of the coordinator's office. The Board of Directors of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Association approached the Governor's Office, legislative leadership, and the membership of the West Virginia Association of County Officials to develop a plan for the continued funding of the central office. The basic concept was developed wherein each county would be assessed an annual fee based on population, assessed valuation, and other factors and revenue generated would be placed in the "West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute Fund" to insure continued operation of the Institute.

With the support of the Governor's Office and legislative leadership, West Virginia Code §7-4-6 created the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute which commenced on June 8, 1995 and would continue to exist until July 1, 1998. The 1998 Regular Session of the Legislature continued the Institute until 2001, by the 2001 Regular Session of the Legislature until July 1, 2005 and by the 2005 Regular Session of the Legislature until July 1, 2008. The agency was included in the new performance review legislation that year as a "permanent" agency ending the four-year renewal cycle.

## **III. STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE INSTITUTE**

The Prosecuting Attorneys Institute is a public body, whose membership consists of the fifty-five elected county prosecuting attorneys in the state. Overseen by an executive council consisting of seven prosecuting attorneys, elected by the membership, and two persons appointed by the county commissioner's association of West Virginia, the daily activities of the Institute are handled by an executive director (licensed to practice law in WV), employed by the executive council, and who serves at the will and pleasure of the executive council, is full time and may not engage in the private practice of law.

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**ANNUAL REPORT CY 2024**

**PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS INSTITUTE**  
Membership - 55 Elected County Prosecutors  
Overseen by an Executive Council

West Virginia Code §7-4-6(d) establishes the duties and responsibilities of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute. The duties and responsibilities of the institute, as implemented by and through its executive council and its executive director, shall include the following:

(1) The provision for special prosecuting attorneys to pursue a criminal matter in any county upon the request of a circuit court judge of that county and upon the approval of the executive council;

(2) The establishment and implementation of general & specialized training programs for prosecuting attorneys & their professional staffs and all statutorily authorized law enforcement or investigative agencies of the state or its political subdivisions;

(3) The provision of materials for prosecuting attorneys and their professional staffs, including legal technical assistance and technical and professional publications;

(4) The compilation and dissemination of information on behalf of prosecuting attorneys and their professional staffs on current developments and changes in the law and the administration of criminal justice;

(5) The establishment and implementation of uniform reporting procedures for prosecuting attorneys and their professional staffs in order to maintain and to provide accurate and timely data and information relative to criminal prosecutorial matters;

(6) The acceptance and expenditure of, grants and gifts and acceptance of services from any public or private source;

(7) The entering into of agreements and contracts with public or private agencies or educational institutions;

(8) The identification of experts and other resources for use by prosecutors in criminal matters;

(9) The recommendation to the Legislature or the supreme court of appeals of the state of West Virginia on measures required, or procedural rules to be promulgated, to make uniform the processing of juvenile cases in the fifty-five counties; and

(10) The development of a written handbook for prosecutors and their assistants to use which delineates relevant information concerning the elements of various crimes in West Virginia and other information the institute considers appropriate.

Other statutory duties of the Institute currently include or have included:

(1) Develop reporting procedures for inclusion in the central abuse registry in conjunction with the criminal identification bureau and the office of the administrator of the Supreme Court of Appeals pursuant to West Virginia Code §15-2C-3;

(2) Nominate members for the child fatality review team pursuant to West Virginia Code §49-5D-5;

(3) Assist in the mediation process along with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources when a dispute arises between the prosecuting attorney and the Department of Health and Human Resources about an action proposed by the other that is believed to place the child at imminent risk of abuse or serious neglect pursuant to West Virginia Code §49-6-10a; and

(4) Administer the Forensic Medical Examination Fund to provide for payment of forensic medical examinations performed on victims of sexual assault pursuant to West Virginia Code §61-8B-15 through 18.

#### **IV. INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES**

The broad outline of the duties and responsibilities of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute is contained in West Virginia Code § 7-4-6. The Institute's duties and responsibilities are implemented by the executive council through the executive director.

##### **A. SPECIAL PROSECUTOR APPOINTMENTS**

When a county prosecutor is disqualified from handling a criminal matter, and upon request of the circuit court judge, the Institute provides a prosecutor from another county to represent the State's interests. No attorney fees are assessed to the requesting county and no additional compensation is received by the responding prosecuting attorney or assistant prosecuting attorney assigned to handle the case.

**429 REQUESTS FOR SPECIAL PROSECUTORS IN CY 2024**  
**A TOTAL OF 8,351 REQUESTS SINCE CREATION OF INSTITUTE FROM**  
**ALL FIFTY-FIVE WEST VIRGINIA COUNTIES**

**ATTORNEY FEES CY 2024**  
**ESTIMATED SAVINGS TO COUNTIES OF \$849,420.00**

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This system results in substantial savings to the counties, which would otherwise bear the costs of hiring special prosecutors at industry standard rates and provides a professional prosecutor in the event of disqualification. The process has gained wide acceptance by the circuit judges across the state and is operating well. Prior to the creation of the Institute, counties had to pay high attorney fees to part-time prosecutors or assistants from other counties or private attorneys for representation in these cases. During calendar year 2024 the Institute received **429** requests for the appointment of special prosecuting attorneys. As of December 31, 2024, a total of **8351** requests for special prosecutors have been received, from all fifty-five counties, since the inception of the Institute.

Although no requirement exists to compel special prosecutors to keep records of the time expended on these appointments, some do. Because of the nature of, and timelines involved in, criminal prosecution, such records received during calendar year 2024 do not necessarily correspond to the cases assigned. For example, one case assigned in May of 2024 might not be completed until sometime in 2024 whereas another case assigned on the same date might be completed within the same month.

ATTORNEY FEES – TOTAL ESTIMATED SAVINGS  
SINCE CREATION OF THE INSTITUTE  
**\$15,685,560.00**  
ESTIMATED TOTAL SAVINGS TO COUNTIES

Every criminal case is unique, and the time spent on these cases varies with the particularities of each case. A 2005 sampling of time records received by the Institute revealed an average of 13.2 hours being expended per case assigned.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years there has been no data to suggest that the hours expended figure needs changed. Based upon the sampling and calculating the compensation of hiring attorneys at an average hourly rate of One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) per hour, the counties realized an **estimated savings** for the calendar year 2024 of **\$849,420.00**.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming the same average number of hours for all **8,351** cases assigned since the creation of the Institute the counties will, upon completion of the remaining 2024 cases, realize an estimated total savings of **\$16,534,980.00**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sample size was all 49 reported special prosecutor assignments received in 2005, with a total 646 hours reported. This average is slightly lower than the calculated average hours per case reported in previous years and yields an average of 13.2 hours per assignment. The high ratio of misdemeanors to felonies explains the low average hours per assignment for that calendar year. This is a conservative estimate of time expended. Actual time expended may be greater in individual cases.

<sup>2</sup> The minimum savings was calculated as follows: 429 cases X 13.2 average hours per case X \$150 per hour = \$849,420.00.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated total savings since inception of Institute were calculated as follows: 8,351 cases X 13.2 average hours per case X \$150 per hour = \$16,534,980.00

## B. TRAINING

The West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute provides or facilitates a variety of training to the state's prosecutors, law enforcement officers and others within the criminal justice system. ***The Institute directly produced 47 training dates in 2024.***

### 1. Regular Prosecutor Seminars

The Institute produces two (2) regular training sessions on topics of concern and interest to prosecutors in the winter, summer of each calendar year at different locations throughout the state. These educational activities generally consist of approximately twelve hours of continuing legal education over a two-day period covering all aspects of prosecutorial duties and feature experts in areas of criminal justice. Efforts are made to schedule at least two nationally recognized speakers per session; West Virginia experts, including prosecutors and assistant prosecutors, various state agencies, the court system, law enforcement and others present as well.

Attendees are updated on legal issues, technology, state and federal case law, case investigation, case preparation and more. Materials include resource material to be used during the courses as well as in the participant's practice. These courses provide uniformity in the approach to prosecution of criminal violations throughout the state. This West Virginia centric training is a necessity unobtainable elsewhere.

The Institute is considered a presumptive provider by the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Commission of the West Virginia State Bar and provides West Virginia's prosecuting attorneys and assistant prosecuting attorneys with training sufficient to enable them to satisfy MCLE requirements. Regular training seminars were held in June and December 2024 live and via ZOOM video conferencing. Combined registration was **300** prosecutors. Mandatory Continuing Legal Education hours were: summer – **13.5** and winter – **13** (including a minimum of **3** hours of ethics or related topics per conference).

PROSECUTOR TRAINING 2024	
Summer & Winter Conference Attendance	300
Combined Trial School Attendance	19
Total	319

The Institute, as it has since it's inception, also produced the quadrennial, "Newly Elected Prosecutor Course". **19** "Newly Elected" Prosecuting Attorneys and a number of key members of their incoming staffs attended and were instructed by 7 heavily experienced presenters and mentors.



**2. Specialized Training for Prosecutors;  
Forensic Interviewing of Children (*Finding Words/ChildFirst*)**

*ChildFirst* (formerly; *Finding Words*) is a unique course designed by and for the frontline child abuse professional and is offered to prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and child protection workers. Originally developed by the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI), its goal is to train these professionals to work together throughout the investigation and into the prosecution where appropriate. The Institute completed a rigorous qualification schedule years ago, met all the outlined criteria and was certified by APRI as a *Finding Words* state. Some years later the course was moved to a Midwestern University and renamed *ChildFirst*. Held in twice in 2024 *ChildFirst* had over 30 attendees from the ranks of social workers, law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

**MINIMUM CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION SAVINGS - 2024**  
**\$77,680.00**

On a per hour per person basis a total of **3884** continuing legal education hours were provided to the state's prosecutors at the Institute's regular training seminars and the trial schools alone. Commercial continuing legal education costs upwards to \$45.00 per hour. State supported continuing legal education costs attendees an approximate average of \$25.00 per hour. As a result, counties realized a minimum savings of **\$77,680.00<sup>4</sup>**. Privately sponsored legal education would be double or triple that figure.

**3. Key Personnel**

Since 1997, the Institute has sponsored annual training for key personnel of prosecutor's offices and includes administrative assistants, paralegals, secretaries, and other non-attorney staff members. Because these individuals play key roles in maintaining and assisting in the operation of a prosecutor's office, the Institute has recognized the importance of providing specialized training to these personnel. Held virtually in June via Zoom, there were **52** attendees at this meeting.

**4. Victim Advocates**

The Institute has participated in specialized training for victim advocates since 2000 involving a wide range of victim issues. We have also been involved in the Supreme Court's annual training of Magistrates, the State's Strangulation Symposium and the State's Sexual Assault Response Team Symposium.

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<sup>4</sup> For illustrative purposes the savings were conservatively calculated using the \$20.00 per hour difference between a hypothetical, purposely low in-state commercial average of \$45.00 an hour and the \$25.00 per hour figure of continuing legal education provided in-state by the Institute and does not include the much higher cost of out-of-state courses.



## 5. Law Enforcement

### a. West Virginia State Police Academy

The Institute began providing basic criminal procedure training for each class at the West Virginia State Police Academy in 2005 and assisted in development of several revisions of that part of the curriculum since. In 2024 the Institute trained over **182** basic officers and cadets at a rate of **96** hours per academy class resulting in **17,472** class hours on a per hour per student basis. Critiques and evaluations indicate a high satisfaction rate for these courses.

### b. Generalized Annual In-Service Training

The Institute continues to provide in-service training for law enforcement officers across the State. Prosecutors believe this training is extremely important in helping law enforcement understand best practices related to the quality of their work. **36** registrants/officers took advantage of this program in 2024.

### c. Specialized In-Service Training

The highly specialized forensic interviewing of children course, *Finding Words/Childfirst*, was also available to police officers. The officer who attended this five-day course received **40** hours of law enforcement in-service credit. All law enforcement in-service training provided by the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute are approved by the Law Enforcement Training Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Crime, Delinquency and Correction.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER TRAINING

Academy class members trained in 2024	182
General annual In-service attendees	36
ChildFirst	8

### d. Other Trainings

The Institute has also provided training for numerous state agencies or groups involved in the criminal justice system upon request. Since 2006 the Institute has trained Workers Compensation Investigators, various West Virginia Public Service Commission staff, the WV State Auditor's Securities Fraud Investigation Unit, the State's Alcohol Beverage Control Investigators, Magistrates, etc. More recently, we offered 48 hours of law related training to 45 members of a newly formed Investigators unit within the Division of Corrections. More training of this nature is expected in the future.

## **C. MANUALS AND PUBLICATIONS**

The Institute provides, on an on-going basis, written materials and publications to West Virginia's prosecutors. The Institute provides prosecuting attorneys with updates on court cases, changes in court rules and new practices in the criminal justice system, policies and procedures and other information of interest to prosecutors.

In conjunction with two general prosecutor trainings (winter & summer) and any specialized programs written materials of instructors and presenters are prepared and distributed at no cost to the participants. Additionally, the Institute has periodically electronically published a general newsletter with information and updates for every prosecutor and assistant prosecutors, key personnel, Office of the Attorney General and all circuit court judges. Faxes and electronic mail messages containing news clips and other information relating to criminal justice issues are also sent to prosecutors and assistant prosecutors throughout the state on a per occurrence basis.

After the regular legislative session each year, the executive director of the Institute prepares a summary of all legislation that impacts the criminal justice system and provides this summary to all prosecuting attorneys, assistant prosecuting attorneys, law enforcement agencies, circuit court judges and various other individuals who have expressed interest therein.

## **D. TECHNOLOGY IN THE COURTROOM**

The West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute has a significant amount of audio, video and computer equipment that is available for use by local prosecutors' offices in case preparation and trial. This equipment has been loaned out by the Institute to local prosecutors' offices at no cost whereas, if rented from the private sector, such use could become quite expensive. During the calendar year 2024, almost no one took advantage of our equipment loan program because; unlike the past, most counties now have equipment of their own. Since the program's inception WV counties have realized an estimated total of **\$760,035.00** in savings on technical equipment 'rentals'. The program is effectively defunct now because it is no longer needed. The same is not true of the technical assistance related to the use of such equipment (see below).

## **E. EXPERT WITNESSES**

The Institute identifies experts needed in trial preparation, trial, and technical assistance, along with related resources, for use by local prosecutors in criminal cases and investigative matters. This information comes from either national sources or from fellow West Virginia prosecutors. Through ties with the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators, the National District Attorneys Association experts are readily made available to local prosecutors, together with materials and information to challenge defense experts.

## **F. LEGAL AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH, ADVICE AND CASE CONSULTATION.**

The Institute provides legal research and other technical advice to individual prosecutors and counties on a frequent basis. Local prosecutors may contact Institute staff who can then provide immediate assistance which includes research, resources, technical assistance, and coordination. Conservative estimates of time expended for this purpose may be found below. This information is then used in development of training programs.

The Institute's two lawyers average approximately 10 to 12 hours per week via in person, phone and email consultation in which they render technical advice and assistance to prosecutors in the uniquely specialized legal field of prosecution. Assuming the conservative, hourly legal rate assigned to special prosecutions of \$150.00 the counties have saved an estimated minimum of another **\$78,000.00**.

The Institute also provided the counties technical assistance in the form of answers to technical questions regarding the uses of the equipment previously mentioned as well as other technical equipment used by prosecutors to help jurors better understand both the evidence being presented and the issues at trial.

This assistance was rendered in the field on multiple occasions, in office at prearranged consultations and via phone and by email too often to count. Review of available records indicates that the Institute's Information Systems Coordinator spent **44** hours rendering technical assistance to various prosecutor's offices. Using an average rate of \$175.00 per hour as a benchmark these counties have realized a calendar year 2024 savings of **\$7,700.00** here as well.

In addition to the above and his regular tasks at the Institute such as managing the special prosecutor database, etc. (Sections I & J below), he also spent **185** hours in county prosecutor training and law enforcement training support as well as acting as liaison for the Institute with the State of Office of Technology.

## **G. BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS**

The executive director and staff attorneys of the Institute participate on numerous boards, commissions, task force and planning committees to help develop a coordinated criminal justice system. We assist in the development of policy, coordinate efforts and to recommend and implement legislation through these boards, commissions, task forces and planning committees.

Some of the agencies, boards, and committees with which the Institute has worked with or is currently working with include, but are not limited to, the state's Fusion Center, the Governor's Committee on Crime, Delinquency and Correction, The Oversight Committee for West Virginia's Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center, the Drug and Violent Crime Policy Control Board, the Sex Offender Advisory Board, the Sex Offender Registration Review Task Force, the Sexual Predator Task Force, the Eyewitness Identification Best Practices Task Force, the Family Violence Coordinating Council, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Advisory Board, the West Virginia Sex Assault Kit Initiative, the Erin Merryn Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Assault, the Crime Scene Investigator Certification Board, and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

## **H. Violence against Women Resource Prosecutor**

The Violence Against Women Resource Prosecutor (VAWRP) position began in April 2013 and was established to assist in centralizing and coordinating law enforcement, prosecution, advocacy and judicial responsibility for cases of sexual assault and stalking; developing and strengthening policies and training for police, prosecutors, advocates and other interested parties in recognizing, investigating and prosecuting sexual assault perpetrated upon older individuals and individuals with disabilities; and developing and implementing policies and training for police, advocates and prosecutors in recognizing, investigating and prosecuting instances of sexual assault and stalking with emphasis on recognizing the threat of repeat perpetration.

The VAWRP's purpose is the training of local prosecutors, law enforcement, advocates, members of the Regional and Rural Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) members, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) and other interested parties. This position has evolved to include domestic violence issues and includes committee work with the Coalition Against Domestic Violence. It now also includes training to an expanded audience of first responders in the above topics as well as now domestic violence, strangulation, human trafficking and dating violence. The objectives of the VAWRP are as follows:

- 1. To actively participate as a member of the statewide SART to provide input into overall project training agenda, technical assistance, and programming activities;*
- 2. To actively participate as a member of the statewide SANE Board to provide input into overall project training agenda, technical assistance, and programming activities;*
- 3. To train the elected prosecutors and their assistants and their staff on effective prosecution of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking offenses;*
- 4. To assist in the coordination of training and technical support to local law enforcement, domestic violence, and sexual assault advocates, SART personnel, other first responders and SANEs;*

5. *To provide quality, up to date legal reference material to assist prosecutors, law enforcement officers, advocates, SART and SANE members and others to more effectively prosecute domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking cases; and*
6. *To raise awareness of issues pertaining to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking by providing information and education to prosecutors, law enforcement officers, advocates, SART and SANE members and others.*

Training for prosecutors has been provided through both general prosecutor trainings as well as specialized strangulation, sexual assault and stalking related courses. Law enforcement training for both the State Police Cadet and Basic Officer courses at the West Virginia State Police Academy on constitutional law, court systems, police power and authority, search and seizure, Sexual Assault and Stalking trial tips, lethality assessment, strangulation, effective report writing, victim interviewing and annual in-service training for law enforcement. Past training includes training criminal justice professionals through training conducted in but not limited to Flatwoods, Bridgeport, Morgantown, Charleston, Huntington, Martinsburg, Mercer, Wood, Berkeley and Fayette County. Training for SANE members has been provided through seminars given in Huntington on trial tactics. Technical assistance was provided through responding to requests for information and assistance in a variety of areas pertaining to sexual assault and stalking for various prosecutors, advocates and law enforcement officers throughout the state.

## **I. INTERNET WEB PAGE**

The Institute maintains an agency web page which contains information about the Institute, services and information of use to local prosecutors and links relating to various aspects of the criminal justice system. Available on the web page are: the Institutes purpose and objectives, Institute staff and contact information, a listing of all county prosecutors together with a link to those having their own web pages, information concerning the Forensic Medical Examination Fund, a calendar of events and trainings, a traffic safety resource section, copies of the safety newsletters, utilities and a copy of the uniform criminal jury instructions previously written on behalf of the Institute. The database administrator oversees the administration of the web page.

## **J. TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

The database administrator maintains all electronic equipment for the agency, including computer and telephone systems. He is also available and routinely provides technical support services to the local prosecuting attorney offices without additional charge in accord with the statutory mandate of the Institute. As can be seen above this results in substantial savings to local prosecutors who would otherwise have to contract for such services at a significant hourly rate.

## **K. FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION FUND**

The Violence against Women Act provides that each state must have a method to pay the cost of forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual assault. Effectively these type funds are ‘earnest money’ necessary for the States to qualify to then apply for and receive VAWA grant money from the Federal Government. In accord with this mandate, the West Virginia Forensic Medical Examination Fund was created by the West Virginia Legislature and is contained in WV Code Section §61-8B et seq. and WV specifically in Code Sections §61-8B-15 through 18.

Prior to the Legislature’s establishment of the Forensic Examination Fund, West Virginia had no specific mechanism to pay for this type of examination and many victims/survivors of sexual assault went without. In the statutory provisions creating the WV Forensic Medical Examination Fund, the WV Prosecuting Attorneys Institute was charged with the responsibility of administering the Fund and providing reimbursement to licensed medical facilities performing forensic medical examinations.

### **306 CLAIMS PROCESSED DURING 2023**

These statutes provide that following a forensic medical examination medical facility submit a statement of charges to the Institute upon which they are reimbursed by the Institute at a rate set by procedural rule (based upon the amount of funds allotted by the legislature and amended in 2024).

The statutory objective of the Forensic Medical Examination Fund is to provide payment for forensic medical examinations in sexual assault cases. However, additional benefits include providing a more effective prosecution of persons alleged to have committed a sexual assault while protecting the rights and dignity of victims. Also, in conjunction with the Foundation for Rape Information Services, the Institute provides a variety of information to individuals who work with sexual assault victims.

In 2023, at the urging of various advocacy groups and the Legislature’s Women’s Caucus, the amount of reimbursement was increased over threefold to \$1000.00 per examination. To underwrite this increase, the Legislature allotted over \$560,000 in Fiscal Year 2024 and just over \$568,000.00 for Fiscal Year 2025 for this Fund to provide kits to hospitals, allow payment for costs associated with the collection of forensic evidence and a personnel slot for administration of the fund.

The Institute processed a marked increase in claims for payment in the second half of FY2024 and the first half of FY25 (CY 2024). Of the 306 claims processed, over 99% of those were processed within 21 days of receipt of the claim. The Institute suggests that a five-year period of data beginning July 1, 2023 will be necessary to properly evaluate the long-term needs in the fund to address the annual monetary requirements for the fund.



## **V. SOURCES OF FUNDING**

Funding for the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute is provided from a variety of sources including county premiums, grants and federal funds. General revenue funds are limited and are used only for the administration of the Forensic Medical Examination Fund and to match grant monies.

COUNTY PREMIUMS. West Virginia Code § 7-4-6 provides for the payment of monthly premiums on a sliding scale by the fifty-five counties. The monthly premium for the largest counties was set at \$400.00 per month, while the smallest counties pay only \$50.00 per month. All premiums received are deposited in the "West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute Fund." Premiums collected are used for personnel costs, expenses, supplies, rent and other costs associated with continuation of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute. The total for FY 2024 was: \$242,700.00

GRANTS. The Institute was awarded two grants from the DOJ of over \$193,461.00 for the Violence against Women Resource Prosecutor.

FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION FUND (General Revenue). This Legislature funded the Forensic Medical Examination Fund for FY2025 in the amount of 568,607.00. This funding entitles the state to apply to receive millions annually in federal Violence Against Women Act monies.

GRANT MATCH (General Revenue). Many grant programs require a cash match in order to receive such funds. The required match ranges from ten to twenty-five percent of the grant. The Legislature provided just over \$112,555.00 in general revenue funds as cash match funding for the Institute for the current FY. With that amount the Institute is able to receive grant funds as noted above.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Prosecutors, assistant prosecutors, law enforcement and others across West Virginia recognize the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute as a vitally important and necessary component of the criminal justice system. In providing professional training and educational materials, technical support, prosecution services and myriad other services not only to prosecutors' offices, but also to the various other agencies and individuals servicing the criminal justice system, the Institute has proven to be a vital and necessary component of the system.

The Institute not only provides stability and uniformity to the administration of justice within the State of West Virginia to the benefit of the state's citizens, it does so in a cost-effective manner. All aspects of the Institute's work greatly benefit prosecutors and others within the criminal justice system. Absent these services the State of West Virginia and its counties would have to shoulder the burden of the costs represented in this report as savings and suffer the lack of centralization of services in the process.