

STACY A. SCOTT
PUBLIC DEFENDER
Eighth Judicial Circuit

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353 South Court Street
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(352) 486-5350



Serving Alachua County

Serving Baker County

Serving Bradford and
Union Counties

Serving Levy and
Gilchrist Counties

Reply to:

The Office of the Public Defender, 8th Judicial Circuit, represents adults and children charged with criminal offenses and clients held in civil commitment under the "Baker Act" and the "Sexually Violent Predator Act." Assistant public defenders represent defendants who are determined indigent and appointed to the office by a judge. In our office, attorneys are supported by investigators, legal assistants, and certified legal interns (third-year law students and graduates not yet admitted to the Florida Bar). The 8th Circuit is comprised of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy and Union counties. In FY 2014-15, circuit-wide our office represented a total of 13, 985 clients with a total of 16,541 cases. In Alachua County, we represented 8, 835 clients with 10,387 cases. Our office employs a total of 68 people, with 50 of those employees working in our Alachua County headquarters.

Our office is committed to efficiently providing our clients with effective legal representation, and treating our clients, our employees, and our community with dignity and respect.

HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

The Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution protects the right to an attorney for those accused of a crime. "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense."

The United States Supreme Court has interpreted that right to mean that the court must appoint an attorney to represent a criminal defendant who cannot afford to hire one. The most significant decision on the right to counsel in Supreme Court history was *Gideon v. Wainwright*¹, in which the Court held the right of a poor person in a criminal trial to have the assistance of an attorney is a fundamental right essential to a fair trial.

Clarence Earl Gideon: The case of Clarence Earl Gideon started in Florida and ultimately led to the creation of the Florida Public Defender System in 1963. When he was accused of burglarizing and stealing from a poolroom in Panama City, Florida, he was in his 50s, had an extensive criminal record, and had served time in jails throughout the country.

When Gideon requested the Court to appoint an attorney to represent him, the judge denied his request based upon the requirements of Florida law at the time. Gideon represented himself in a jury trial and was convicted. He appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and won.

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In response to the U.S. Supreme Court's holding in Gideon, the Florida legislature created the Florida Public Defender System, establishing an Office of the Public Defender for each of Florida's judicial circuits. At that time there were only 16 Judicial circuits in the State of Florida; that number has since grown to 20 judicial circuits. The 20 circuits include a total of 67 counties throughout the state.