

North Carolina Department of Justice

Strategic Plan

2023 – 2025



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1. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

Attorney General Josh Stein leads the North Carolina Department of Justice and the important work its dedicated employees perform.

Our office's primary functions include:

- protecting North Carolina consumers and vulnerable populations;
- providing legal representation to state agencies;
- assisting local law enforcement in fighting crime and prosecuting cases;
- and managing training and standards for law enforcement.

Protecting North Carolina Consumers and Vulnerable Populations

Our office takes seriously its role to protect North Carolina's consumers. We do so by working to prevent scams, investigating and taking legal action against corporations that break the law, combatting Medicaid fraud, prosecuting tax cheats, and confronting the opioid crisis.

Providing Legal Representation to State Agencies

Attorneys and staff in our Legal Service's Division provide legal advice and representation to state government departments, agencies, and boards/commissions. This work ranges from defending the State against liability claims and in contract disputes to protecting the environment in order to maintain clean air and water.

Assisting Local Law Enforcement in Fighting Crime and Prosecuting Cases

Our Department protects people from crime by prosecuting complex criminal cases and handling all criminal appeals from state trial courts. The State Crime Lab works closely with the state's criminal justice partners and analyzes evidence to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent.

Managing Training and Standards for Law Enforcement

DOJ supports local law enforcement efforts through The North Carolina Justice Academy which provides training for officers and Criminal Justice Training and Standards and Sheriffs Standards which certify law enforcement officers.

2. Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

The North Carolina Department of Justice protects the people of North Carolina through its work to prevent crime and support law enforcement, to safeguard consumers, and to defend the State, its people, and their constitutional rights.

Vision Statement

The North Carolina Department of Justice provides excellent representation and support to law enforcement, consumers, the State, and its people through teamwork, innovation, and a commitment to public service.

Organizational Values

Public Service: We at the North Carolina Department of Justice are committed to serving all of the people of North Carolina.

Integrity: We consider the public good without regard to convenience or self-interest; we are trustworthy and dependable in carrying out our duties, and we uphold the high ethical standards of our professions.

Excellence: We strive to do each and every task to the very best of our ability.

Teamwork: We believe that we will best serve the people of North Carolina by working collaboratively and sharing ideas and solutions across the Department, with our clients, and with the public.

Diversity: We believe that we best serve a diverse public and produce our best work with a workforce comprised of people with different backgrounds.

Innovation: We value looking at old problems with fresh eyes, and we don't do anything because it's the way it's always been done.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

Goal 1 – Use science to promote justice.	
<p>Objective 1.1 – Work with local law enforcement to test all untested sexual assault kits in their custody.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 1.1 – Eliminate the sexual assault kit backlog by the end of 2023, and thereafter, ensure that newly submitted kits continue to be processed in a timely manner.</p>
<p>Objective 1.2 – Reduce the number of cases pending examination by 10%.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 1.2 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead time as of March 2023 = 281 days - Turnaround time as of March 2023 = 64 days
<p>Objective 1.3 – Improve recruitment and retention of qualified, diverse scientists at the Lab to keep up with testing demand and better protect public safety.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 1.3 – Advocate for and educate legislators about the need for a salary reserve fund and salary schedule to better recruit and retain Lab scientists.</p>
<p>Objective 1.4 – Maintain current, reliable scientific equipment to help address continuing growth in evidence submissions from law enforcement agencies.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 1.4 – Advocate for a dedicated funding source at the General Assembly to maintain and replace the Lab’s scientific equipment.</p>

Goal 2 – Provide excellent legal counsel and defense to the State.	
<p>Objective 2.1 – Ensure that each state agency, board and commission has the best representation possible.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.1 – Work with the Legislature to address personnel needs that arose out of the \$10 million budget cut in 2017 and continue to overburden the department’s attorneys. Continue to enter into MOUs with agencies to fund attorneys until the budget situation is addressed. Ask client agency heads for feedback annually on our performance and their needs.</p>

<p>Objective 2.2 – Increase practice-specific training opportunities.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.2 – As part of our emphasis on providing excellent legal services, offer timely and practice-specific training and education to our staff via monthly lunch and learns and outside CLE opportunities, including offerings from the Practicing Law Institute, National Association of Attorneys General, and Attorney General Alliance.</p>
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<p>Goal 3 – Provide local law enforcement agencies with high value, cost effective, and responsive officer training, licensure, and certification activities.</p>	
<p>Objective 3.1 – Provide training and standards that focus on 21st Century policing.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 3.1 – Continue the North Carolina Justice Academy’s work to provide relevant and cost-effective training to best serve officers and communities in today’s environment. Measure online and in-person courses taken and survey law enforcement for feedback on topics being provided.</p>
<p>Objective 3.2 – Maintain safe and high-quality law enforcement training facilities.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 3.2 – Inform legislators and state budget analysts about essential repairs, renovations, and new infrastructure needs at the Justice Academy to maintain the highest training and safety standards.</p>
<p>Objective 3.3 – Provide thorough and efficient certification for law enforcement agencies.</p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 3.3 – Continue to provide excellent customer service to law enforcement agencies through the Criminal Justice Standards and Sheriffs’ Standards Divisions. Measure turn-around time on providing certifications and testing-results. Utilize the ACADIS system to efficiently manage certification files and other records. Continue review of the</p>

	Commissions' Administrative Code to promote the recruitment, retention, and professional development of personnel.
Objective 3.4 – Offer a free accreditation program to help local law enforcement agencies adopt and demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism.	Performance Measure or Milestone 3.4 – Advocate for resources to hire permanent staff for the North Carolina Law Enforcement Accreditation Program, moving the program out of its pilot phase. Begin accrediting local agencies with a goal of at least 150 agencies by the end of 2025.

Goal 4 – Develop and implement policies to protect North Carolinians.	
Objective 4.1 – Address the opioid epidemic.	Performance Measure or Milestone 4.1 – The opioid epidemic will continue to be a top priority for our office as we work with law enforcement and other stakeholders to focus on prevention, treatment, and enforcement. Continue to provide training, support, and a forum to share best practices with law enforcement agencies on important policy topics. Obtain resources for the state to use for opioid abatement.
Objective 4.2 – Tackle law enforcement officer shortages statewide.	Performance Measure or Milestone 4.2 – Advocate for legislation and rule changes to ensure that law enforcement agencies can recruit and retain public-spirited officers who keep our communities safe. Law enforcement agencies are struggling to staff their departments, putting public safety and public trust at risk.
Objective 4.3 – Put and keep violent criminals behind bars.	Performance Measure or Milestone 4.3 – Provide excellent prosecution services to District Attorneys who have conflicts or need support in handling complex cases. (Track number of cases and number of convictions.) Advocate to increase the number of criminal appellate attorneys in DOJ

	to effectively represent the state in all criminal appeals.
Objective 4.4 – Expand DOJ’s capacity to go after drug traffickers.	Objective 4.4 – Advocate for resources to create a Fentanyl Control Unit that offers expanded fentanyl, drug trafficking, wiretap, and overdose prosecution resources to all district attorney offices in the state beyond our current capacity.
Objective 4.5 – Protect North Carolina consumers through legislation and legal action.	Objective 4.5 – Advance legislation that protects consumer financial wellbeing and privacy and hold bad actors to account in our court system.

Goal 5 – Build and maintain a diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects North Carolina.	
Objective 5.1 – Hire diverse candidates to fill vacancies across the Department.	Performance Metric or Milestone 5.1 – Track and review key metrics indicating diversity among DOJ staff (e.g. race, gender, disability, military status). Utilize hiring and interview panels to improve fairness and reduce bias in hiring.
Objective 5.2 – Cultivate an inclusive work environment.	Performance Metric or Milestone 5.2 – Collect input from DOJ affinity groups. Assess additional opportunities and strategies to improve staff’s sense of appreciation and community.

4. Highlights and Opportunities

Agency Highlights and Best Practices

Criminal Division

In 2022, DOJ handled approximately 445 criminal appeals and represented the state in 48 oral arguments before state appellate courts. Our office also handled 40 non-capital habeas cases in federal court and represented the state in two oral arguments before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Special Prosecutions team resolved cases leading to more than \$400,000 in judgments in tax revenue cases. The section also works with law enforcement partners on wiretaps and extraditions, facilitating more than 100 wiretap cases and more than 500 extraditions in 2022.

The Public Safety section represented the state in more than 500 cases involving the Department of Public Safety or State Bureau of Investigation in 2022.

The Law Enforcement Liaison Section defends the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission and the Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission when it devises or rescinds certification of an officer or law enforcement agency. Attorneys in this section represented the state in more than 40 contested cases in 2022.

The Criminal Justice and Sheriffs' Standards Commissions certified 4,861 new law enforcement officers and renewed certifications for 2,660 officers in FY 2021-22. CJ Standards grew substantially in 2022 to meet the demands of law enforcement. The Commissions also completed a pilot program with six law enforcement agencies participating in the North Carolina Law Enforcement Accreditation program, which DOJ hopes to grow and institutionalize in the coming years.

In 2022, the Justice Academy successfully completed 218,417 online trainings – the most in its history. The Academy offered 556 in-person courses to 12,020 in-person students at its two locations. The Academy also reopened a renovated residence hall on the Salemburg campus and underwent an agency reorganization to streamline work and improve service to stakeholders.

The State Crime Lab worked 41,683 cases in FY 2021-22 and spent 571 hours in the courtroom to provide testimonies in cases. The Lab also completed a renovation of the Drug Chemistry and Toxicology section in Raleigh to improve efficiency and allow for growth as caseloads continue to increase.

The Medicaid Investigations Division (MID) investigates and prosecutes health care provider fraud and abuse of Medicaid patients and patients in Medicaid-funded facilities. In 2022, MID surpassed \$1 billion dollars in criminal restitution and civil recoveries since the division was first created in 1979. In 2022 MID closed 100 cases, of which 48 were criminal cases and 52 were civil cases. Through civil settlements, restitution, and criminal recoveries, the division recovered \$40,264,673.66. With Medicaid expansion on the horizon, DOJ is seeking funding from the General Assembly to significantly expand MID's capacity.

Consumer Protection Division

In 2022, the Consumer Protection Division received 24,981 consumer complaints and recovered more than \$600,000 for North Carolina consumers. The Division also won more than \$300 million in court judgements and settlements, including money from settlements with drug companies that contributed to the opioid epidemic.

Consumer Protection also works with companies and affected customers to protect their data after a breach. In 2022, DOJ received 1,899 notices of data breaches, affecting more than 3 million people in North Carolina. Our office offered security tips to more than 1 million North Carolinians affected by a 2021 T-Mobile data breach.

In June 2022, DOJ reached a \$1.25 million settlement with Carnival Cruise Line stemming from a 2019 data breach. The breach put at risk the personal information of more than 3,000 North Carolinians. The settlement also required Carnival to make changes to better safeguard consumer data.

Protecting the State

DOJ's Environmental Division protects the air we breathe, the water we drink, and our coastal resources. Attorney General Stein filed two new lawsuits against manufacturers of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), a fire suppressant used by firefighters that contains PFAS, for contamination at the Piedmont-Triad International Airport, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, and Marine Corps Air Station New River. The Division also helped to hold the Colonial Pipeline company accountable for a 2-million-gallon spill of gasoline near Huntersville. The spill was one of the largest on land in U.S. history and posed a threat to surrounding soil and water. On behalf of DEQ, the Division obtained a consent order requiring Colonial Pipeline to remediate the spill and pay \$4.5 million in penalties.

In 2022, the Health and Human Services Division closed 1,020 Medicaid cases and 430 childcare/welfare cases. Attorneys resolved 61 health care personnel registry cases to prevent unlicensed health care workers with substantiated findings of abuse, neglect, misappropriation, and fraud or drug diversion from caring for vulnerable residents. Attorneys resolved 207 adult care licensure and mental health licensure and certification cases to protect some of North Carolina's most vulnerable residents, and they successfully certified more than \$1.3 million for collection in delinquent child support for children who are entitled to child support payments.

DOJ lawyers represented the Department of Transportation in 2,232 cases in 2022, including 1,930 property acquisition cases to move forward projects to build new highways, bridges, and turnpikes, and a case resolving a multimillion-dollar construction claim against DOT, saving the state millions.

Our Solicitor General's office represented the state in two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. DOJ represented the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in a case seeking to affirm universities' right to pursue the educational benefits of a diverse student body, as well as the State Board of Elections in a case seeking to affirm the right of state courts to review claims of partisan gerrymandering under their state constitutions.

Potential Initiatives

Health Care Consolidation:

DOJ is partnering with state lawmakers to advance legislation to close the health system merger loophole and protect patients by giving the Attorney General adequate authority to review hospital consolidations.

Consumer Privacy & Robocalls:

Attorney General Stein and the attorneys general of Indiana and Ohio recently formed a nationwide Anti-Robocall Litigation Task Force to take legal action against telecommunications companies responsible for bringing illegal and fraudulent robocalls into the U.S. and for routing those calls across the country. We look forward to building out this work further and continuing to act to protect consumers with our state and national partners.

Legal Services Staffing:

We will continue to work with the Legislature to address staffing needs that arose from the \$10 million budget cut in 2017. To effectively handle criminal appeals for the State and serve the State's departments, agencies, and boards and commissions, restoring a large portion of the budget cut is critical.

Collaborative Opportunities

Opioid Settlements:

Our office is partnering with the NC County Commissioners' Association, NC League of Municipalities, Legislature, and Governor's Office to ensure settlement funds from opioid manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacy chains are used as efficiently and effectively as possible to address the opioid epidemic and provide prevention, treatment, recovery support, harm reduction, and justice system strategies.

Law Enforcement Recruitment & Retention

DOJ recently formed a working group with law enforcement, academics, and peers in state government to identify and advocate for legislative proposals that improve recruitment and retention of qualified law enforcement officers across the state.