



# ORLEANS PUBLIC DEFENDERS

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**News**  
April 12, 2011

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## **The Orleans Public Defenders Welcomes Yale Fellow to Staff**

The Orleans Public Defenders welcomes Yale Liman Fellow Seth Wayne to its staff. Mr. Wayne's work at OPD will focus on addressing the mental health needs of clients. A previous Liman Fellow, Benjamin Plener, was instrumental in creating and expanding OPD's Pre-Trial Services Division.

"We are pleased to be able to host such extraordinary talent," says Chief District Defender, Derwyn Bunton. "We will not only be better able to serve our clients and community, but we are also able to do it at no cost to taxpayers." The Yale Liman Public Interest Program funds the placement of several fellows each year into various public interest organizations across the country. "Because we have faced budget shortfalls, resources like fellowships allow us to add full time staff to our office we otherwise would not be able to afford."

OPD's concern about the mental health of its clients and how that impacts the criminal justice system is not new. "We know it is a huge waste of time and resources to allow mentally ill individuals to stay in a criminal justice system that was never meant to serve them long term," says Special Litigation Counsel, Jee Park. "Everyone agrees these individuals must get treatment and the law says this as well," she adds. The New Orleans-based Advocacy Center recently won a lawsuit ordering the transfer of mentally ill individuals from prison to treatment. "It is our job to make sure poor people who are mentally ill get to where they belong," Ms. Park continues. "The lawsuit was a good start, but we need resources like Mr. Wayne to make sure this is happening."

"As a summer law clerk at OPD, I was impressed with the attorneys' professionalism and concern for their clients," Mr. Wayne said of his past experience at the Orleans Public Defenders. "I am glad this fellowship gives me the opportunity to be a part of this work." Mr. Wayne was a law clerk at OPD during the summer of 2009, where he worked closely with attorneys on writs, investigations, and interpreting for Spanish-speaking clients. "I know there is a lot of work to be done around mental health advocacy and I look forward to working with OPD and other system partners to continue the work already started here in New Orleans."