

Montana Department of Justice

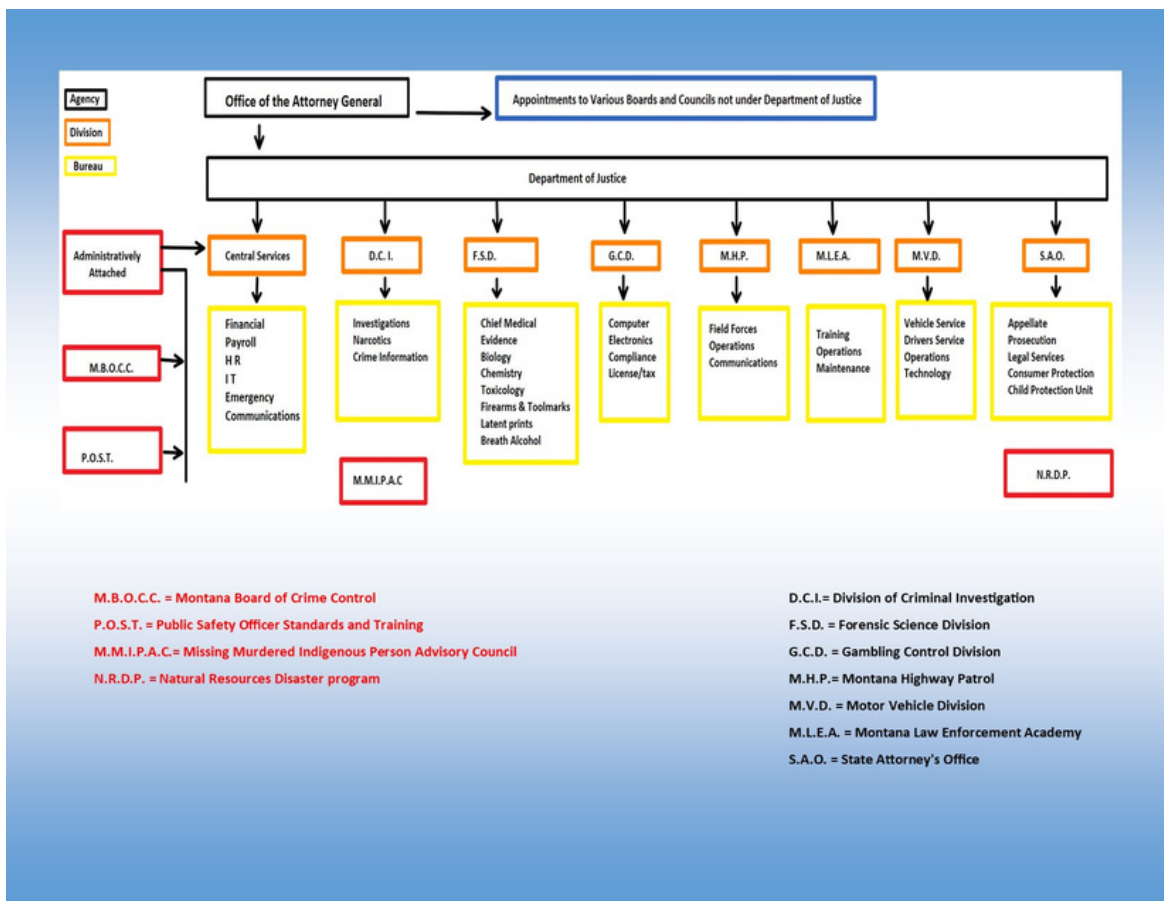
2026 Annual Plan



Overview

The Department of Justice is led by Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen and is Montana's top law enforcement and legal agency. We work in every corner of the state maintaining public safety, prosecuting criminals, representing the state of Montana in court, registering vehicles, licensing drivers and more.

We are the Montana Highway Patrol. We are Montana State Crime Lab and the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. We are the Sexual and Violent Offender Registry and the Office of Consumer Protection. We are the lawyers who defend Montana in court and the lawyers who file suit on the state's behalf when Montana has been wronged.





Division Overview

Central Services Division

Administrator Melissa Gardner

Located primarily in Helena, the Central Services Division houses Justice Information and Technology Services, Human Resources, Budget, Accounting, Contracts/Procurement, and Emergency Communications teams.

Division of Criminal Investigation

Administrator Lee Johnson

The Division of Criminal Investigation is headquartered in Helena with regional offices around the state. DCI delivers the highest level of criminal investigative services to law enforcement departments throughout the state, to include major crimes, narcotics, human trafficking, internet/computer crimes, sexual/violent offender compliance, and numerous specialized programs to combat fraud. DCI also supports a robust network of criminal records and identification services, technical information assistance, and support to missing persons and victims of crime.

Forensic Science Division

Administrator Kimberly Kutch

FSD's main facility is located in Missoula and houses the Biology Section, Chemistry, Firearms & Toolmarks, Latent Prints, Toxicology, Breath Alcohol, and Medical Examiner. The satellite facility located in Billings houses a Chemistry section and Medical Examiner for the eastern side of the state.

Gambling Control Division

Administrator Alex Sterhan

The Gambling Control Division, (GCD) of the Department of Justice regulates all forms of gambling in Montana, except for the Montana Lottery (including sports betting) and Horseracing. Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Revenue, GCD also regulates alcohol and tobacco laws and rules.

Montana Highway Patrol

Colonel Kurt Sager

Montana Highway Patrol Division focuses on safeguarding the lives and constitutional rights of people traveling the ways of our state. We provide courteous, professional, compassionate, and responsive services in the areas of community education, enforcement, investigations, support services, interagency collaboration, and community involvement. We are committed to maintaining the public's trust, being technologically advanced, and efficiently using the resources entrusted to us.

Montana Law Enforcement Academy

Administrator Anne Dormady

The mission of the Montana Department of Justice Law Enforcement Academy is to serve law enforcement agencies and the communities they represent by providing a positive atmosphere where relevant and realistic training for new and veteran public safety professionals occurs.

Motor Vehicle Division

Administrator Laurie Bakri

The Motor Vehicle Division is committed to providing the exemplary customer service Montanans deserve, and oversees 48 exam locations across the state to serve Montanans and has 71 partner locations with county treasurer offices and authorized agents.

State Attorney's Office

Chief of Staff Will Selph

The State Attorney's Office is headquartered in Helena where the Civil Bureau, Appellate Bureau, Agency Legal Services, Prosecution Services, Office of Consumer Protection, and National Resources Damages (administratively attached) are housed. There are also Child Protection Units in Missoula and Billings.



GOAL #1: Increase awareness and utilization of mental health resources

Last year, the Montana Department of Justice launched a Chaplain Program to provide its dedicated staff with comprehensive mental and spiritual health resources with the goal of ensuring the resilience and strength of the workforce, many of whom protect and defend the cherished Montana way of life. A continuous goal of the Department is to expand the Chaplain Program, look for ways to supplement it, and ensure every DOJ employee knows it is a resource available to them.

Performance Measures:

1) Integrate the Chaplain Program into an increased number of DOJ divisions. While divisions like the Montana Highway Patrol and Division of Criminal Investigation were the first to integrate the program into their day-to-day operations because of the dangerous and stressful nature of their front-line work, the Department is working to integrate the program into more divisions:

- The Forensic Science Division (FSD) whose employees encounter critical incidents, vicarious trauma, and extreme stress in their forensic work.
- The Montana Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA), which will begin providing students with increased access to chaplains.

2) Increase the number of critical incidents DOJ chaplains are used as a resource from 12 to 20-30 by year three by increasing awareness of the program.

3) Send communications to all DOJ employees, at least quarterly, to remind them of the Chaplain Program and other mental health trainings and resources provided by the Department.

GOAL #2: Enhance customer service to Montanans

A priority for DOJ leadership is ensuring excellent customer service to the public and the Department's partners. Over the next year, the Department plans to implement new features and services to further its commitment to customer service.

Performance Measures:

1) The Montana Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) will establish "The Bridge," an enhanced and unified call center that will provide quick and accurate information to customers who call into MVD.

2) MVD will also implement two new opportunities to make life easier for Montanans:

- Begin vehicle transactions in exam stations. By this time next year, customers will be able to transfer their out-of-state driver license and their car registration at the same time in an MVD exam station, rather than visiting the MVD office and the county office. Customers will also be able to renew registrations and get a replacement registration at MVD exam stations.
- Begin the exchange of digital birth certificates with Arizona and Michigan (more states to come), which will allow MVD to verify license and ID information faster and make life easier for the customer, eliminating wait times and cumbersome paperwork.

3) To accomplish one of the Gambling Control Division's (GCD) missions to be a resource, not just a regulator, the division is looking for ways to refine the gambling application process and improve the customer experience. For example, moving more of the process online to make it easier for the user.



GOAL #3: Provide increased and improved training opportunities

The Department of Justice is always looking for innovative ways to reach its partner agencies and provide the tools and training necessary to keep Montanans safe.

Performance Measures:

- 1) The Division of Criminal Investigation will work with the Montana Law Enforcement Academy to design and deliver at least one detective boot camp to give local law enforcement detectives the opportunity to improve their crime scene processing and overall investigative techniques for major crimes.
- 2) MLEA will expand scenario-based training in the Law Enforcement Officer Basic and Correction Detention Officer Basic Courses to help students gain more experiences similar to what they'll face in the field on the job.

GOAL #4: Crackdown on fraud

The DOJ is committed to protecting Montanans and their hard-earned money from fraudsters trying to steal it. Whether its the sterotypical online scammer, someone trying to steal their vehicle title, or Medicaid fraud, the Department will continue to expand outreach and education efforts to stop fraud before it happens, and investigate and hold perpetrators accountable when fraud does occur.

Performance Measures:

- 1) Maximize effectiveness and increase awareness in all DCI programs combating fraud.
 - For example, continue working with the federal government to uncover Medicaid fraud and combat fraud, waste, and abuse to protect taxpayer-funded programs.
 - Continue to provide robust education and outreach regarding scams to the elderly population and investigate and prosecute those preying on them.
- 2) DCI will create a Vehicle Fraud Enforcement Unit to combat vehicle and title fraud.
- 3) GCD will collaborate with industry and regulatory partners to combat an ever-growing presence of illegal online gambling, which can narrow the scope of potential violators and save the state valuable resources.

GOAL #5: Recruit and retain troopers

The Department will continue to put an emphasis on recruitment and focus on how to retain current public safety personnel.

Performance Measures:

- 1) Hire 30 people for trooper positions.
- 2) Hire 7 people for public communications specialist positions.